



# Just Another Week

By Andrew Dannehy  
*Surprises In  
The Mail*

Like, I'm sure, every other Trempealeau County resident, my mailbox has been filled with fliers telling me who I should vote for. And, like I'm sure most Trempealeau County residents, those fliers have been going directly in the garbage.

But, you can imagine my surprise a few weeks ago when I saw the Trempealeau County Times logo on one of the fliers. Let me be clear: The Times had absolutely nothing to do with that flier being sent out.

The flier included the Times logo and headline from our Sept. 20 story regarding state senate candidate Dave Estenson. The flier also included a QR code that allowed anybody who received it to read the story by using their phone to scan the code. While we stand by our reporting in that story, we had nothing to do with it being used for a political advantage.

As it says on the top, the flier was paid for by the Wisconsin State Senate Democratic Committee as an in-kind donation to Together with Jeff Smith. Smith, of course, was Estenson's opponent in the Nov. 8 election.

There really is nothing we could've done to prevent the story from being used in this manner. Once the ink is dry and people have access to stories, they will use them as they see fit. I once was asked by someone seeking a local office if they could use one of our stories when they went knocking on doors. My response simply was: There's nothing we could do to stop you.

Predictably, the story blew up when we published it and I have tried to remain quiet despite numerous accusations being thrown my way. I'm not going to get into the details of the story, but I do think explaining the process might be important to some.

Just like the Times had nothing to do with the fliers being printed and mailed out, the democrats had nothing to do with the publishing of the story. I received a tip from a Whitehall resident and discussions with more area residents led to a Freedom of Information Act request. The request was sent in July and a response was received on Sept. 16.

As the American Press Institute says, the purpose of journalism "is to provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies and their governments." That story was merely information, I contacted the subject, ran his full statement and portions from what he told police at that time. I thought the only fair way to handle such a story was to tell the stories of all involved.

As I have told almost everybody who I have spoken to about the story, I admire the way Estenson handled the days leading up to the story being published. He seemed to have a strong understanding that this was part of the deal when he chose to run for public office and I was just doing my job. When I spoke to him on the phone the day before the story went to press, he seemed to know that, regardless of if we published a story, this information would get out. Readers have probably seen the commercials and other fliers that contain excerpts, not from our story, but from the report itself - the Times was not the only entity that filed an open records request.

I wanted to wait to publish the story, but thought the best thing would be to get it out with Estenson's statement since I knew other outlets would not provide him the same opportunity.

Every election season seems to be more volatile than the past and I knew this wouldn't be any different. Publishing that story was the Times doing its job of informing the public, though I do wish it wasn't used for political advantage.

## Times' Columns

The opinions expressed by columnists in the Trempealeau County Times are their own, and do not reflect the editorial positions of this newspaper. Editorials in the Times will be clearly marked as such.

## WEEKLY POLL QUESTION

Did you vote in Tuesday's  
midterm election?

**Yes**       **NO**

Vote at [www.trempealeauntimes.com](http://www.trempealeauntimes.com) or call us at  
715-538-4765. Voting closes at 8 a.m. Tuesday morning..

## LAST WEEK'S POLL QUESTION RESULTS

Do you vote for candidates based on  
their political party?

43% **YES**      57% **NO**

# From The Early Files



Compiled from: The Arcadia News-Leader, Galesville Republican & Whitehall Times

## 25 YEARS AGO November 13, 1997

The Whitehall High School volleyball team never really got much of anything going in their Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association State Tournament match at Neenah High School and lost in four games to Abbotsford. Whitehall fell behind 2-0, losing the first set, 15-1, and the second, 15-10. Whitehall won the third set, 15-11, but lost the fourth, 15-10. The one consolidation that the Norse girls could take was that they lost to the eventual state champions. The Falcons, who were eliminated in the first round of the 1996 tourney, after dispatching Whitehall, went on to defeat Hustisford for the Division Four championship.

The campaign to raise money for the new Whitehall Family Aquatic Center, although officially still short of its goal, already may be "over the hump." Organizers of the Aquatic Center Capital Campaign reported a total of \$390,600 in donations and pledges received as of this week. The goal of the campaign is to raise at least \$400,000 of the \$1.2 million cost of the new pool, which is presently under construction at the site of the city's old pool. Campaign chairman Dave Pientok said a number of pledges received during phone solicitation effort last month were still outstanding. He said that, if all those pledge cards are turned in with the amounts

promised, the total could go over \$400,000.

An Independence teenager is facing a felony criminal complaint, the result of a juvenile game of "I dare you" that turned serious. Lance Rock made his initial appearance in Trempealeau County Circuit Court Friday charged with causing injury by negligent use of a dangerous weapon. Rock, 17, is also charged with misdemeanor battery. The charges stem from a May 9 incident at Rock's Independence residence in which he allegedly cut a female's wrists after she dared him - jokingly, she later told investigators - to do so.

A new branch of Subway sandwiches opened on Nov. 11 in Arcadia's downtown district. Mike Hallum and Allen Ronneberg are the co-owners of the new branch restaurant. It is the third Subway the two men have opened together in the area. According to Hallum, the first Subway restaurant was opened in Osseo three years ago. After 10 months, the two opened another store in Whitehall.

Daryl and Susie Fox of Arcadia raise and show Great Danes at dog competitions throughout the United States. Daryl, an Independence native, left the small community in the mid-1980s to join the United States Navy. While serving, he became interested in Great Danes. He bought his first Great Dane and fell in love with the breed.

A state Department of Transportation official agreed to do a speed study and review lighting options in the area where a high school student was struck by a truck while crossing Main St. in front of the Gale-Etrick-Trempealeau High School on Oct. 20. The pickup driver was tagged for failing to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk.

The shrapnel that pierced Don Hellrung's chest and stopped a quarter-inch short of his heart and the bullet he took in a leg as he ran for shelter during the U.S. invasion of Cambodia required a month's stay in a hospital in Japan. But those weren't his only wounds during a relatively short stay in Vietnam in 1969-70. There was what used to be called "shell shock" and now is known as posttraumatic stress syndrome.

## 50 YEARS AGO November 16, 1972

Whitehall native Mrs. Robert Forsythe, the former Mary MacCornack, was elected to the Minnesota state legislature last week Tuesday, winning 81.5 percent of the vote in District 39-A in Edina.

Two Arcadia men were charged after the vehicle one

of them was driving crashed into the bedroom wall of an Arcadia residence late last Thursday. The vehicle then backed out and drove away. Ronald Schock was apprehended the next morning by the Arcadia Police Department and was charged with driving after revocation. He was then turned over to the Trempealeau County Sheriff's Department.

Miss Sheila Stateson teaches two Spanish classes and one in English I at Arcadia High School this year. She is hired cooperatively by Arcadia and Blair where she also teaches two Spanish classes.

Monday, Nov. 20 marks the opening of the 1972 MS Hope Chest appeal of the Greater Wisconsin Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. This is the first year in which the Hope Chest appeal has been conducted in Galesville.

## 75 YEARS AGO November 13, 1947

On Tuesday, the opening day of the annual Trempealeau County board meeting, attorney Burr Tarrant of Whitehall, supervisor from the Second Ward, presented

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## Piercing Thoughts

By Benjamin Pierce

*We Deserve Respect, Truth  
From Public Officials*

"You're done asking people questions about this."

It took a minute for me to realize that a public official last month actually said those words in a phone call to me, a journalist trying to keep residents up to date about changes coming to a community that were also discussed previously at a public meeting.

When I told the official moments later that it was my job to keep people informed and ask questions and that I would not stop asking such questions, I was hung up on.

I wonder what would have happened if I was a concerned citizen calling to ask the official the same question about an issue at a recent meeting that was open to the public. Would I still be disrespected? Repeatedly talked down to? Hung up on?

Because if I were a community member calling someone whose job is literally to advocate for me and look out for my best interests and those of my community, that would really tick me off.

I won't name the official or the municipality because I'm going to be the bigger person. But we need more from someone in a position of authority.

Almost all local officials are not in their position for the attention or the power. Most are there to better their community, help others and institute positive change - to help propel the municipality to greater heights. And most do an incredible job.

Part of working in a public office includes you being the person to pick up the phone and answer questions of citizens and the local media. If the answer to every phone call comes with the audible 'click' of a hang-up anytime you don't like the question, why are you in office?

I will not back down. I will not be bullied into silence or complacency, and both I and the Trempealeau County Times will continue to ask questions to keep the public informed and keep transparency alive.

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**A SOUND POLICY:** Every government agency, or official, that handles public money should publish at regular intervals an accounting of it, showing where and how each dollar is spent. This is a fundamental principle of democratic government.

**COLUMNISTS:** Opinions expressed by Trempealeau County Times columnists do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this newspaper.

**ADVERTISING:** Publisher will determine if advertising is acceptable and reserves the right to reject or cancel any advertisement at any time.

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