

TALK AROUND TOWN

Are you there, god? It's me, Pete

When I was in the fifth or sixth grade, every kid in school was trying to get their hands on a copy of a book called, "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret."

Almost as soon as the Judy Blume novel was published, conservatives began efforts to have it banned. That — naturally — led me and my classmates to seek it out. What could possibly be so titillating that our parents didn't want us to lay eyes on it?

In retrospect, it was pretty tame. The protagonist, Margaret, is a sixth-grader who with her friends is preparing for the rite of passage that is a girl's first period. Because the book spoke openly of menstruation and brassieres and sanitary napkins — and Margaret's struggles with faith which ultimately led her to choose her own belief system — religious conservatives fought it tooth and nail. It remains one of the top 100 most-challenged books in America.

And here's the thing: All the hand-wringing made us want to read it even more. I finally got my hands on a well-thumbed copy from my friend Christine Hughes, and I read it — which turned out to be a good thing. Lord knows my single mother never would have sat me down and explained menstruation or how to French kiss.

I read it, and I learned. On most of our culture's thorny topics — abortion, the death penalty, school prayer — I can at least see and understand both sides, even if I side predominantly with one or the other.

But not with book-banners — who never, ever have ended up on the right

side of history.

And yet here we are, well into the 21st century, with a group of local folks again taking up pitchforks and torches and trying to dictate what other people can read and think.

Today, they're not terrified of kids reading and learning about periods or doubting organized religion.

Today, they can't countenance anything in print that acknowledges that non-binary people exist.

Today, right now, as you read this, there are kids in Iron River and everywhere else in the Bay Area who are wondering why they aren't attracted to the opposite sex like their peers are. They're confused about what is happening to their bodies as they enter their teens — just like Margaret was. They are no more likely to turn to their parents with questions than I or the millions of young women who read Judy Blume's book were.

They instead might turn to books — to find out that what they're experiencing is normal, expected, acceptable and survivable.

They might even learn that — GASP! — masturbation is a thing, and it won't make you blind. And that there's a right way and wrong way to use oral dams and condoms to protect yourself.

Those are weighty topics, to be sure. But I guarantee you that kids are talking about them in grade school, the same way I and my peers did, the same way these Iron River parents did when they were that age.



PETER J. WASSON

More PETE | A9



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Low-income isn't low-morals

EDITOR: In response to Daily Press Editor Peter Wasson's recent column on the low-income housing: The family I grew up in would have

easily qualified for the low-income housing being built in Ashland. I think I turned out alright!

The Rev. Dale P. Chesley, retired,
Good Shepherd Lutheran of Ashland

LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Ashland Daily Press welcomes letters to the editor from readers and the community. In order to facilitate constructive dialogue in the community, letters must meet certain requirements.

Letters are limited to 300 words, must be signed, and authors must provide their name, address and a contact number. The author's name and city of residence will be published with the letter. Readers may submit a letter once every two weeks.

Multiple authors may sign a letter, with up to three signatures allowed on any given letter. Form letters or letters written by organizations without a specific author will be rejected.

Letters will be fact-checked. Writers are encouraged to ensure that they offer information to support claims they make.

Letters on upcoming elections will be cut off a week in advance of Election Day. Letters received after that cutoff will not be published.

The Daily Press reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity and to reject letters that do not meet the newspaper's standards for publication.

To submit a letter to the editor, send it to pressnews@ashlanddailypress.net or Letters to the Editor, Ashland Daily Press, 122 W. Third St., Ashland WI 54806.

What do you think?

Email Letters to the Editor to pwasson@ashlanddailypress.net



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RELIGION COLUMN

Believe it or not

I have a coffee cup that shows the word "Faith" in large letters. I've seen that word on many other items lately. What does the word mean, I wonder? Have faith in God? Believe in what-ever I want? Have faith in myself before anyone else? Placing my dependence on my spouse, par-

comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)



SALLY BAIR

The question is: how do we "get" faith? Romans 10:17 declares, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This verse emphasizes the role of scripture in

building faith and developing a deeper understanding of God. The more time we spend reading and studying the Bible, the easier it will become to rely on it. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today and forever." We can depend on, believe in and have faith in his word regardless of our situation. History has proven that every time God moves on earth, it is because someone believed. Faith is not to be taken lightly. It is the very essence of our being. And as we rely on God and his word more and more, it will transform and strengthen us in all aspects of life.

Lord, thank you for faith. Strengthen our reliance on you so we can believe the impossible, even as the early Christians did. Keep us from wavering, from looking to outsiders for our dependence rather than to your reliable, true word. As we pray, guide our thoughts and words in the direction You would have us take. Help us to remember that all things are possible to those who believe. In Jesus' name, amen.

When we choose to commit our lives to God, however, we can be certain that he will honor our faith with answers to our unselfish prayers. His timing may not be ours, and his answer may not what we expect, but he will answer. And our earnest, believing prayers will not only bless and honor him, but will bring great rewards for us.

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, faith is depicted as crucial for salvation and a meaningful relationship with God. In fact, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for he who

Sally Bair may be reached at sallybair@gmail.com or P.O. Box 186, Washburn, WI 54891.

Pete/from A8

"It's about the kids," these Iron River activists say. "We have to protect the kids!"

No, it's not about the kids. It's never about the kids.

It's about control and an attempt in this case to deny agency to gay folks and erase them from society.

Just look at the language they use in their

letter — circulated anonymously because on top of being reactionary, the organizers are afraid to be held accountable — describing books about non-binary topics as "pornography."

(As an aside, please spend a moment considering their preposterous proposition that toddlers in Iron River are considering sex-change operations.)

Let's be clear: Like it or

not, gay folks exist. They have always existed. They will continue to exist. And some of our kids will turn out to be gay — nonbinary, in current parlance.

Parents who love their kids will want them to have any help possible as they navigate what even in the best of circumstances is a fraught time in their lives.

Sometimes, that help will come from a book, as it did

for Christine Hughes and my other female classmates in the sixth grade.

Our job as adults is to make sure they have all the information they need, and then to love them.

Kudos to the Iron River librarians who are doing just that, and to the library board members who support them.

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

Sheriff/from A7

Caller reports hitting a deer along Highway 77 in Mellen.

Caller reports his 6-year-old son took the dogs for a walk and hasn't returned; officer on scene reports child located playing at a friend's house and returned to parents.

Caller reports losing a bottle of prescription medication at the powwow grounds in Odanah.

8/19
Caller reports three black cows in the road at 9:50 p.m. along Highway 112.

Caller from Glidden reports the neighbor kids

threw apples at her barn along York Road.

Caller reports a car swerving all over Highway 2 near Kagerville Road.

Caller reports a car with no license plates passed them at high speed along Highway 13 in Marengo.

Caller from a casino in Odanah reports a man and woman fighting in the parking lot of the business; officer on scene reports woman involved fighting with officer; officer reports one woman in custody on unspecified charges.

8/20
Caller reports a red pickup truck with a green door racing around the Beaser-Hegstrom roads area.

Caller from a gasoline station in Mellen reports a drunken couple arguing outside the business; officer on scene reports couple left before arrival.

Caller reports a large disturbance taking place at a campground in La Pointe.

Caller from Saxon reports the neighbors along Birch Hill Court are being obnoxious, yelling and being loud.

Caller from Odanah reports named party threw a rock at the window of her home along Maple Street.

Caller from Butternut would like an officer to tell their neighbor not to come over to their residence on Third Street anymore.

Caller from Mellen

reports the neighbors on West Point Drive are being loud and he would like an officer to tell them to take it down a notch.

Caller reports cows loose along Highway 13 near Ashland.

Caller reports people arguing over ownership of a dog at a home on Beaser Road near Ashland.

Caller reports losing a wallet while getting ice cream at a store in La Pointe; officer on scene reports wallet located and returned to owner.

Caller reports vehicles parked along Schoolhouse Road in La Pointe causing a traffic hazard.

Colonizing/from A4

So there was this massive transfer of land and wealth from Native people through the federal government to individual settlers in the United States. This process facilitated colonization by creating a monopoly on land sales and making that land really affordable to most people in order to encourage immigration.

RF: How else did the U.S. financially benefit from the forced appropriation and distribution of land?

MW: The federal government took the wealth as well as the land, plundering the resources of the Indigenous population in order to economically develop the state and territory.

People in states like Michigan and Wisconsin quickly discovered that having Indians in place as a colonized subject was way more lucrative than kicking them off and taking over their land.

The federal government forced treaties requiring Indigenous people to cede land in exchange for cash. Usually, however, around 90% or more of the payment

went to traders or merchants who claimed that Native peoples owed them money from the fur trade.

Merchants would take that money from the government and invest in their own businesses. Many were then hired by the government. They made money by claiming the cash payments as debt and by providing the federal government with provisions that were also part of the annual payment for land sales.

There was a lot of money to be made in not removing the Indians. That cash helped people develop the infrastructure of the businesses in the state economy.

RF: The way English settlers defined land management and ownership did not match up with how other cultures lived. Because of that, the English felt they had a right to the land. This idea feels like it lies at the heart of westward expansion, including what happened in the Northwest territories.

MW: Absolutely. The "doctrine of discovery" is the idea that when Europeans arrived in the Americas, in North America in particular, they'd found a new

uninhabited world because it didn't have recognizable forms of property or private property like you would have in Western Europe.

At some point, settlers had to come to grips with the fact that the land they thought was empty was in fact occupied by Indigenous people. Following through with their plan meant they had to actively work to colonize Native people in their homeland.

RF: What do you make of current land issues related to the descendants of the tribes you write about?

MW: I'm interested in the Land Back movements.

A lot of the land in northern Wisconsin, northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula was ceded when there wasn't demand for it. A lot of that land has been passed into public trust for counties or universities. When they were ceded, these lands were sold or given to the U.S. and then used to fund the

endowments for land grant universities. Part of the public infrastructure of the U.S. comes from this transfer of land.

Reckoning with that, coming to grips with it and giving the land back if possible is a really interesting recognition of the colonial history of the U.S. while undoing some of its legacies.

RF: Do you want to see wider efforts to share the history that you recount in your book?

MW: Absolutely. I don't think people realize the extent to which history, particularly in the Midwest, is an Indigenous history. American history is intertwined with Indigenous history in a way that can't be separated. There's a connection that Native people have to land that is still here today that precedes America. This is really important for people to think about when tribes exercise treaty rights now.

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