

Gitche Gitche Gumee

REMEMBER FIFTY YEARS AGO... BEFORE THE NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL... WHEN WE WOULD DRIVE TO CANADA... FOR QUICK HEALTH CARE?..



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From candy shop to video cameras

I have had the honor of being part of the Cook County "press corps" for more than 10 years. I've attended just about every imaginable event—school programs and plays; football games in frigid weather; election forums, mellow and fraught with tension; governmental meetings sometimes tedious, sometimes stressful. And through the years, despite some rivalry, I've enjoyed the camaraderie of the other members of the press—Vicki Biggs-Anderson, Adam Moe, Jay Andersen, Bill Neil of the *News-Herald*; Pat Ciochetto, Carah Thomas-Maskell and Jane Howard of the *Cook County Star*; and Barbara Jean Myers of WTIP radio. All of us lost an interesting and informed colleague—and a dear friend—this week, Harold "Holly" Nelson. Holly passed away on Monday, August 31, 2009.

Holly attended all of the events listed above and more, with his trusty video camera, capturing news and activities for PAC-13, the Grand Marais cable access channel.

It was reassuring to have Holly at county board, city council, and EDA meetings. It was good to know that if I missed an important part of a

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meeting, Holly had it on tape. Many, many, times over the years, we reporters have gone to the tape to confirm questionable quotes.

It was always nice to have Holly to chat with on breaks during meetings, or when reporters got "kicked out" for closed sessions. No one understood the frustration of meetings that seemed to last forever than the guy who had to switch videotapes!

We had many good political discussions waiting for meetings to start. Conversations generally started with one of us asking, "Do you think they will resolve this today?"

Odds are, the board or council or commission did not and we'd have more discussion on what should—or should not have—been done. Holly, ever philosophical, would say, "I'm glad I don't have to make the decision. All I have to do is record it!"

I enjoyed grownup discussions with Holly. I'd known him just about all my life. I remember when he had the Candy Shop across the road from the school. Holly was the reason many of us almost missed the bus many times. The candy shop was too enticing with its giant Jolly Rancher bars, Charms sweet & sour lollipops, and Nut Goodies.

In later years, Holly was the "go to" guy for technical advice. He was the one who introduced movie videos to Cook County. As a young parent, I appreciated his video loan library. I was thankful for the very affordable—sometimes-free—home entertainment.

Holly's recording skills will be missed, at government meetings, at Johnson Heritage Post openings, at graduations, at Fisherman's Picnic and 4th of July parades, at Vikings sporting events, and others. However, much more, we will miss his quiet, unassuming manner and his generous contribution to our community.

A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you, and were helped by you, will remember you when forget-me-nots are withered. Carve your name on hearts, and not on marble.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Letters to the editor

Grateful to call Cook County home

On Sunday, August 2, a "fun raiser" was held for my godfather, Ron Theisen, who is battling cancer. Although I was not able to attend, I heard from multiple people that it was a huge hit. And that got me thinking—not for the first time—about what a unique place in which I grew up.

Having the opportunity to live in and travel to different parts of the world, I realize (again, not for the first time) how special Cook County is.

It is the type of place where people fight for others, money is given where it is needed and there is no shortage of encouraging words and friendships. I have truly missed those qualities in my time away from home. It is so heartwarming to know that those ideals are still alive and well.

It is because of how we all grew up that

there were numerous young people at the Ron-a-thon. We all know how important it is to help out others. That is an attribute that we learned from this community and one that we have carried on throughout our young lives.

Thank you to everyone who turned out to support such a worthy cause. Thank you to the local businesses and people who donated money, time and goods to ensure that the event would be a success.

And mostly, thank you to everyone who proved, once again, why Cook County is so special. It is for these reasons I will forever consider Cook County "home" no matter where I live. I am forever thankful for growing up in such a wonderful place.

Jenna Latz Duba
Tempe, Arizona/Lutsen

Community losing more than a pharmacist

A little over two years ago Arrowhead Pharmacy in Grand Marais was sold to Nikki and Derek Engelhaupt and two other couples. In the sale the other couples were the larger shareholders and in turn stood to make the highest profit. Nikki and Derek on the other hand were the ones that would end up doing all the hard work. To make an extremely long story short, mutual respect was never reached between the partners and as a result Nikki was forced to step down.

Respect seemed to be a common problem with the other partners. Many of the employees were branded as incompetent and liars, me being one of them. I was thought of as so insignificant that after working with one of the other owners for weeks, the individual didn't even give me the respect of learning my name. Mind you, I wore a nametag. My name is Lesli, not Lindsay.

I have to be honest; the switchover from the previous owners to the Engelhausps was really rough. I told Nikki later that I had given them two weeks and if it didn't get better I was going to quit. Luckily it got better. Thanks to Nikki and Derek's hard work and dedication, and patience on everyone's part we made it

through. I don't know if I have ever said it out loud, but sticking with them was one the best decisions I've made. Not only did I end up with one of the best jobs in town, I gained a friend.

Nikki was not only an insanely hard worker; she also did her best to help people.

Her patients and giving the best prices she could always came before money. I can't count how many times she gave up making a profit so a patient could afford their medication. I don't know many business owners that would do the same. Now, because of these "changes" our community is not only losing a great pharmacist, we are losing a good family. It's sad to know that money has overshadowed dedication and hard work, and once again the little guy loses.

I'm going to miss the Engelhausps and even though I know they will do fine wherever they end up, I'm wishing them luck anyway. I'm standing by them to the point of walking away from the job that I grew to love, but it isn't the same job without them.

I love you guys.

Lesli Higgins
Grand Marais

Is Broadband a gift horse?

The county board is pursuing a possible federal Stimulus Grant for \$33,000,000, which if received, will partially fund a proposed \$50,900,000 project. This project proposes that the county build a fiber optic broadband system to serve the entire county. The county will issue \$18,000,000 in bonds to match the federal grant, and plans to cover the interest, bonding costs and repayment with operating income and from the 1% sales tax being considered.

The reasons presented in support of this system appear to be:

1. The federal grant will fund 65% of the project cost.
2. It will provide access to high speed broadband Internet, television and telephone service to the entire county.
3. It will add 11 - 13 employees to the county payroll to manage, operate and maintain the system.
4. It will encourage individuals and possibly businesses to relocate in Cook County if they can telecommute.
5. The system owned and operated by the county will provide better service at 10% lower fees than users are now paying.
6. We must do this to stay competitive.

The project timeline is driven by the federal grant. If approval were received in November 2009, the project would have to start in 2009. To proceed the county must pass a 65% referendum authorizing it to operate a telephone system; put the 1% sales tax in place to provide the funding to carry and retire \$8,000,000 in bonding; build a business plan and sell an \$18,000,000 bond issue as a requirement of the federal grant. Assuming these are revenue bonds, the plan will have to project income at a minimum to cover \$10,000,000 in bonding.

Has the county done a business plan to support a \$50,900,000 project that will put them in uncharted territory operating, maintaining and upgrading a Broadband fiber optic

system that will compete with, and in order to be viable, displace the companies (and employees) that presently provide telephone, television and internet services to the county?

The federal grant is like the "gift horse" that is free when you get it. The grant's purpose is to assist in building a system that would not be feasible or affordable without it. What will happen if the system needs to be replaced to stay abreast of technology and there is no federal money available?

Nearly everyone in the county that wants it, has telephone and television service. They will not necessarily change to what the county offers. Grand Marais and Grand Portage have broadband service, Arrowhead Electric and others offer satellite Internet service, and wireless Internet is also available.

The county would be responsible for bonding costs on \$18,000,000 in bonds, which, if issued at 5% will require \$900,000 in year one for interest alone. \$400,000 of this is projected to come from the 1% sales tax. If the bonds require a sinking fund or annual payments and are 20 year bonds that means another \$900,000 per year.

By using 1% sales tax revenue to fund and retire \$8,000,000 debt over 20 years at 5% interest will require approximately \$12,000,000 that could go to other purposes in the county.

I question if this would even be considered if the grant were not in the picture. Most of the services proposed are already being offered.

I know it's hard to look a gift horse in the mouth, but considering the financial risk and cost for what appears to be a nominal incremental benefit, I hope the county board will look long and hard before they bring this horse home.

John Lindell
Grand Marais

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CORRECTIONS:

- » In last week's report on the Cook County Fair it was incorrectly reported that Vi Rindahl had the largest number of entries with 40—she actually had 50 entries to the fair. The *News-Herald* apologizes for the error.
- » In the August 29 article *Iron Range Resources Wage Subsidy Program*, a local contact phone number was inadvertently omitted. For information on the wage subsidy program, contact Dawn Byholm at Cook County Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency at (218) 387-1134 or ccaeo@ISD166.k2.mn.us. The *Cook County News-Herald* apologizes for the omission.

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