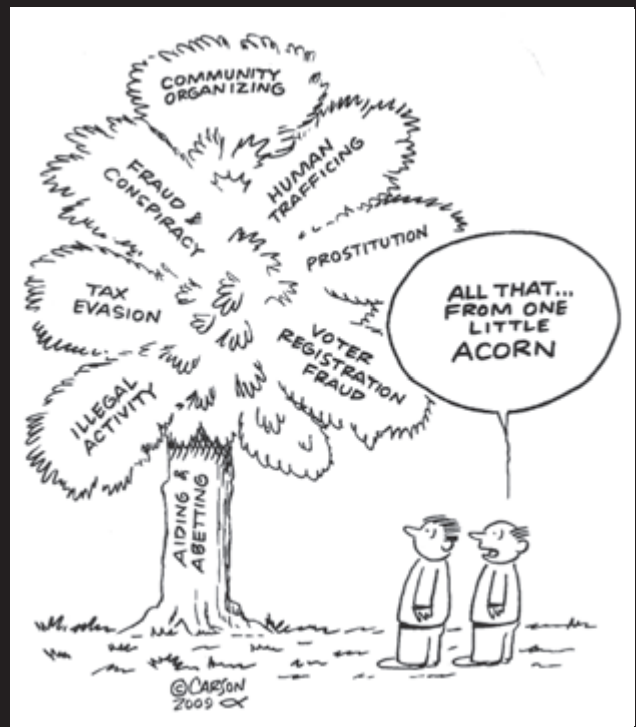


Gitche Gitche Guinee



Vroom, vroom... a moving memory

It was fun to be part of the North Shore Hospital Auxiliary open house on Saturday, September 12. It was wonderful to see so many former doctors, nurses, and staffers and to hear stories of how the hospital came to be. The hospital auxiliary did a great job spreading the word about the open house with an advertisement filled with tidbits of news from 50 years ago. However, the picture of the "old" hospital brought an entirely different sort of memory to my mind.

brothers do—he bothered us immensely. I have very distinct memories of us girls laying on the floor coloring and the bratty young boy trying to stomp on our fingers! So it is no surprise that he is the protagonist in this near-disaster.

What I recall is that my cousins were spending the day with our family because their mother was in North Shore Hospital having just given birth to their baby sister. My mom needed to bring something to their mom. And instead of trooping into the quiet hospital with three noisy kids, she told us to stay in the car (remember it was a different world back then!).

Immediately my young boy cousin decided that he should "drive" the car while she was gone. He hopped into the big bench seat and pretended to drive. He jerked the steering wheel from side to side and made the appropriate "Vroom! Vroom!" noises.

His sister and I knew that this was not a good idea and we urged him to get back into the back seat. But, being the belligerent little brother, he simply ignored us and decided to fiddle with the shifter. Although we didn't know what was happening at the time, as a grownup I now know that he moved the lever from park to neutral. At the time, I just knew that he had made a serious error.

We all felt a surge of terror as the car began to move, rolling backward down the hospital driveway, picking up speed. We all grabbed a hold of something, screamed and held on for dear life.

Fortunately the wheel had been turned—either by mom when she parked or by my young boy cousin when he was playing—so the car didn't coast directly down the paved driveway onto the main road, but made a half circle, spinning us across the lawn and into the ditch.

My little boy cousin, the troublemaker, leapt over the front seat into the back to pretend that he had nothing to do with the disaster.

I don't remember mom's reaction—although I vaguely recall crying tearfully, "He did it!"

I don't think we were in trouble. The incident probably frightened our parents as much as it did us. Relief that we survived probably protected us from the spankings we deserved (well, one of us deserved!). I don't remember how the car got out of the ditch.

I just know that we were very lucky kids!

You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.

Franklin P. Jones

UnORGANIZED TERRITORY



Rhonda Silence
starnews@boreal.org

Seeing the picture of the old, one-story, flat-roofed hospital reminded me of a scary experience. Not one that happened inside the hospital, but outside in the parking lot!

It's a very early life memory, so I may not have all the details exactly correct. But I don't want to talk to my mom to clarify the memory, because she will probably be appalled that I'm sharing this story. This column is no reflection on mom's parenting skills—it was just a very different world when I was a kid. Remember when I was growing up, children weren't even seat belted in cars, much less placed in car seats. We didn't wear bicycle helmets and we walked barefoot everywhere. There were numerous hazards that we were lucky to survive.

Growing up I spent quite a bit of time with two of my cousins, a brother and sister, who will remain nameless to protect the innocent—and the guilty. However, I will let you know that this brother and sister are still living in Grand Marais—one is a local businessman and the other an elementary teacher. My girl cousin and I were very good friends and her brother—well, he did what little

Letters to the editor

Rain garden a great asset

Congratulations to the Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District and the County Board for their plans for a rain garden at the courthouse (Sept. 12, 2009 edition: *Rain garden demonstration project for courthouse*).

This is a great step forward on addressing the problems of polluted runoff. Rain gardens are being used more and more across the country in both large and small settings and are finding favor with many homeowners and gardeners looking to add new features to their yards while also protecting water quality.

Because rain gardens are designed

to temporarily trap water, they can support many species of flowers and plants that have a range of water tolerances. Such species as Blue Flag Iris, Butterfly and Marsh Milkweed, Culver's Root, Joe Pye Weed, and various ferns, rushes and sedges will thrive in a rain garden in our area.

The rain garden at the courthouse should be a functional and attractive addition. I would encourage anyone interested in rain gardens to visit the site design toolkit at www.lakesuperiorstreams.org.

Jesse Schomberg
Minnesota Sea Grant

Sensible, practical reform needed for health care

Now is the time to reform how health care is paid for in the United States.

All Americans should have access to high quality health care, regardless of their circumstances. Costs should be controlled through preventative care, health education, efficiency and reduction of bureaucracy. This is morally right and is the standard in every other developed nation.

Our current system of health insurance discourages entrepreneurs and job creation. Starting a new business is risky enough without having to gamble the health of your family. Established busi-

nesses are burdened with unreasonable health care costs, making them uncompetitive in the global marketplace. Even those of us with health care insurance are under the threat of financial and personal disaster at the whim of our insurance company.

We will never have a better opportunity to achieve reform that will make life better for every American. Let's set aside the crazy talk and support sensible, practical reform that works for all.

Bill Hansen
Tofte

Broadband is best use of sales tax funding

The Cook County Board of Commissioners has, understandably, not committed to the use of funds should the sales tax referendum be approved by voters. The primary reason for this is the lack of clarity with respect to grant applications for some of these projects, in particular the federal stimulus grant application package for the Cook County's broadband initiative.

I believe that the broadband project has more support than other single projects as it represents significantly enhanced communications for everyone (phone, TV and internet); significantly leverages other funding sources; is a unique opportunity to get federal funds; represents more economic development (jobs) than other projects and has the potential for Cook County to build and own the project, a

source of economic income.

For all these reasons, should the referendum pass, the voters can rely on our County Board to commit adequate funds to leverage the balance of the funding needed to support the broadband project.

Scott Harrison
Lutsen

Help stop puppy mill operations

Parasites. Mange. Illness. Social isolation. Continuous breeding and inbreeding. Filthy living conditions. These are the hallmarks of "puppy mills." Puppy mills are high-volume, sub-standard dog breeding operations, which sell purebred or intentionally mixed-breed dogs, often to unsuspecting buyers.

For the unwitting consumer, this situation frequently means buying a puppy facing an array of problems, both physical and psychological. Sub-standard breeding practices can lead to genetic defects or hereditary disorders and erroneous or falsified certificates of registration, pedigree, and/or genetic background. Confined to cages with little human contact, one of the greatest tragedies is the lack of appropriate handling by humans and exposure to new experiences, so essential in the very early stages of a puppy's life for suitability as companions.

There are an estimated 4,000 puppy mills in the U.S. that produce more than

half a million puppies a year.

What you can do to stop puppy mills:

- 1. Support legislation that limits the number of animals a breeding facility may have.**
- 2. Consider adoption.** Adopting a homeless dog or puppy instead of buying one is the surest way to counter puppy mills. Animal shelters have dozens of dogs, many of them purebreds, literally dying for homes – many canines surrendered to shelters are euthanized due to lack of space. There are also breed-specific rescue groups for many breeds. Check the website, www.Petfinder.com, as it is a wonderful source for finding the perfect pet!
- 3. Be sure you know precisely where a puppy you purchase comes from.** A red flag is the offer from a seller to meet you at a neutral location – this may be an effort to keep you from seeing the actual place where it was born and kept.

- 4. Avoid the temptation to "rescue" a puppy mill puppy.** Even though your intentions may be good, don't buy a puppy with the idea that you are "rescuing" it. Your "rescue" opens up space for another poor puppy and the money you spend goes right back to the puppy mill operator and ensures they can continue breeding and treating dogs inhumanely. If you see someone keeping puppies in poor conditions, alert your local animal control authorities instead of buying.
- 5. To learn more about the problem of puppy mills and how you can help stop them,** look to prominent organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States and the American Humane Association. Go to www.hsus.org and www.americanhumane.org for additional information.

Katie Winkelman
Silver Bay

Beware of disinformation campaign

Registered voters in Cook County will begin receiving mail ballots in mid-October that will allow them to vote in this fall's referendum on collecting an optional 1 percent sales tax. Legislation has authorized Cook County to collect the tax for 20 years and raise a maximum of \$20 million, provided Cook County voters approve of the tax in a referendum held before Dec. 31. Money raised by the tax would be used to fund a number of programs designed to strengthen Cook County community life.

The ballot will contain two questions. The first is on collecting the 1 percent sales tax itself. To pass, this requires a simple majority of 50 percent plus one of those voting on the question.

The second question asks whether Cook County should build a telephone system as part of its broadband project.

This may confuse some voters.

The broadband project has always involved offering three services to Cook County homes, businesses and public agencies: television, ultra high-speed Internet and telephone service. Because the telephone service would be publicly owned, state law requires that voters approve it. To pass, this question must get at least 65 percent "yes" votes. That is a very high hurdle.

Those working on the broadband project have been warned that voters may be subjected to an intense disinformation campaign in the weeks before the vote. Along with newspaper ads and letters to the editor, groups from outside Cook County may show up to knock on doors and tell voters why a county owned broadband system, and particularly a county owned telephone system, are bad

ideas.

We hope this disinformation campaign does not happen. But if it does, voters should be wary of the claims made against the broadband initiative. In other Minnesota communities that have sought voter approval for broadband, the claims by these outside hired guns have gone beyond the line separating truth from falsehood. Cook County voters might ask the doorknockers where they are from and who is paying them. They might also ask: If the county does not build its proposed broadband system, when might all of Cook County reasonably expect to be connected via fiber optic cable to a system that provides reliable telephone service, television with significant local programming and ultra high-speed broadband?

Jim Boyd
Grand Marais

COOK COUNTY NEWS-Herald

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Published Every Saturday in Grand Marais, MN
by H & D Kettunen, LLC. Circulation 3,600



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