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Magazine

October 2016



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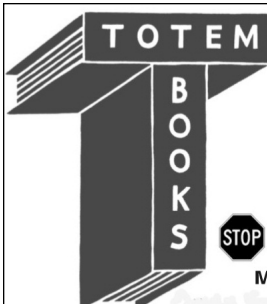
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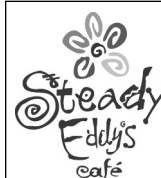


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Commentary *Is 2016 our strangest election?*

By Paul Rozycki

After the first Trump vs. Hillary debate, with all the media hype and Super Bowl-sized audience, most pollsters and pundits gave Hillary the edge. Yet, this year's campaign remains close and competitive. For all the attention given to presidential debates, they don't usually change a lot of votes. Of course, in a close election, it doesn't take a lot of votes to make a difference. (One of the big issues in any campaign is always jobs and the economy, and if there were any guarantees from the debates, it's that pundits and fact-checkers seem assured of long-term employment.)

Our strangest election?

The fact that the election is close isn't strange. Even elections that have a landslide winner have times when the polls are tight. Yet the 2016 election is one for the record books and is the strangest election in decades.

A year and a half ago everyone expected this to be a rematch between the Bush and the Clinton dynasties. They were less than half right. Jeb Bush flamed out very quickly, as did 15 other Republicans, and the most unlikely of contenders, Donald Trump (at best, a dubious Republican), took the nomination.

Even Hillary Clinton's road to her nomination proved the experts wrong. It was supposed to be an all-too-easy cakewalk as the Democrats crowned her as the party's heir apparent. No one expected newly-minted Democrat/independent socialist Bernie Sanders to give her anything close to a serious run for the nomination. But he did.

And the nomination process only set the stage for the general election.

If one were writing a James Patterson or John Grisham political thriller, and created a character like Donald Trump, no one would believe you. After all, what candidate could go around insulting almost every potential voting group, exhibit a lack of a basic understanding of American government and history, show the emotional stability of a three-year old, and win the nomination? What candidate could spend almost no money on a campaign and win? What candidate could have no—zero—experience in government and be a serious candidate? Yet Trump is.

Similarly, how could a candidate with Hillary Clinton's resume and experience, backed by the well-oiled Clinton political machine, be stumbling in the polls and struggling with what should be an easy victory? Yet Hillary is.

So why is this happening?

Some explanations are simple and have been around for a while.

People are worried about the future and it's the year of the outsider. Distrust in both parties and government in general is at a record level (the Flint water crisis is only the most local example.) Trump is clearly tapping into the distrust of all organized institutions.

Others are more unique.

With his background as a reality TV star, Trump has been able to dominate the media in a way that no candidate ever has. It's probably not too much of an exaggeration to say that much of the news coverage this year has sounded something like this: "Here's what Donald Trump had to say today – and, oh yeah, Hillary is running too."

And it didn't seem to matter whether the news coverage was good or bad (and a lot of it was bad). Trump dominated every news cycle. Have our elections become just one more reality TV show — a political version of "The Apprentice" or "The Bachelor"?

In an election where both candidates have reached record levels of distrust, who could win?

How could Trump win?

Logically, Donald Trump shouldn't have a chance. He's gone out of his way to offend his own party and a long list of Republicans have turned away from him, and more than a few are voting for Hillary. Yet, he could pull it off. After all, no one thought he could win the nomination either. Here's how it could happen:

- Winning a third consecutive term for any party is difficult. It's only happened once since WWII, when George H.W. Bush succeeded Reagan in 1988. After eight years of one party, "time for a change" has been an easy political selling point.

- Trump seems to be gaining support from traditional "Reagan Democrats" in Midwestern industrial states like Ohio, Michigan and maybe Pennsylvania. That could be a huge blow to the Democrats, especially in those key states.

- It's an anti-establishment year, where voters are angry at anyone who is in government, particularly if they have been there a long time. Trump's anti-establishment attitude and his crusade against "political correctness" have resonated with a surprising number of the electorate.

- For all of her strong resume, and despite of the fact that she's the first woman nominated by a major party, Hillary hasn't been

(Continued on Page 7.)

Cover: Fall cleanup for Longway Planetarium



Photo of the Month: Capitol Theater project under way

House painting, bike share system proceeding in Central Park

By Nic Custer

The Central Park Neighborhood Association (CPNA) discussed the success of a home painting pilot project in the neighborhood at its September meeting.

The group also heard about blight and beautification efforts and installation of a bike share program.

President Karen Tipper reported a \$60,000 NICE Initiative program had paid 75% of the cost of exterior house painting in the neighborhood. Six homes have been painted so far, with one more planned for the year. Tipper said many of the paint jobs cost \$7,000 to \$8,000.

She said applications for the program were closed for the year but there are many more projects that can be done to improve the neighborhood. The paint program, funded by the McFarlane Charitable Foundation, was intended to grow membership in the CPNA investors committee.

Tipper said the purpose was to get owners involved in making Central Park a model neighborhood to attract future funding from the city and other sources throughout the state.

Incentives for investors

Ingrid Halling said the program could act as a template for other Flint neighborhoods.

"The incentive for an investment is that our owners are involved in making this a better neighborhood," Tipper added. "So the more neighbors we get involved, the better chance we have of coming back with more projects like this."

In exchange for the payment, homeowners must attend three investors committee meet-

ings during the year. Norma Sain, Court Street Village Non Profit, said the program is working and has attracted new committee members.

Smoothing steps to blight elimination

Ingrid Halling, blight committee member, reported neighborhood association officers met with city officials to discuss blight and code enforcement. Central Park and Fairfield Village neighborhood association representatives spoke with Raul Garcia, blight elimination, Mike Reiter, building and safety inspections, and Land Bank's Interim Executive Director Jon Care, about how to assist the city in taking care of blight. Halling said the officials suggested contacting their councilperson and the mayor when a problem remains unresolved.

Sain reported the officials committed to two things. First, they are looking into speeding up the process of demolition for properties such as a burnt-out vacant home on East Street. She was told there was a way to speed up the process by one year but it has never been done in Flint. Care and Reiter agreed to put together a document explaining the process. She said she believes the demolition request will need to go to city council for approval.

They also agreed to work with the court administrator to create a flowchart explaining what happens after code enforcement writes a citation which may help residents track citations through the court system.

Vice President Ed Custer reported the beautification committee had six volunteers add mulch to the cul-de-sacs at East and Court streets and East and Second streets.

He said extra attention needs to be given to the empty lot at 909 E. Second Street and at the end of Court and Thomson streets. The committee recommended asking the Land Bank, which owns the property, to haul away a fallen tree at 909 E. Second St. Volunteers plan to clean up brush and leaves at Court and Thomson streets.

Bike-share system installed

In other news, Crystal Dillard, Flint Cultural Center Corporation, told the group that the Cultural Center recently installed the second site for Flint's bike share on their campus. The Cultural Center bikes are located between the Flint Institute of Art and Longway Planetarium. The bike share is through national bike share company Zagster and allows people to download the Zagster mobile app and pay for the rental with their credit cards. The first half hour is free and \$2 for every additional hour. Day passes (8 hours for \$10) and three-day passes (\$20) are also available.

She said there is another bike station operated by Genesee County Parks. UM-Flint and two other downtown locations plan to install bike share stations soon. She said bikes can be picked up at one station and dropped off at another. Sain said it is a great opportunity for the neighborhood, since 41 percent of the residents don't own cars.

The group meets next at 7 p.m., Oct. 13 at Court Street Village Neighborhood House, 737 East St.

EVM Managing Editor Nic Custer can be reached at NicEastvillage@gmail.com.

Trash dispute back story, Pierce Park prospects focus of CCNA

By Kayla Chappell

The September meeting of the College Cultural Neighborhood Association (CCNA) primarily focused on city issues, presented by Monica Galloway, Seventh Ward City Council member, and Kate Fields, Fourth Ward City Council member.

Other topics raised at the meeting, attended by about 55 residents, included Legionnaires' disease and the future of Pierce Park.

Waste contract dispute discussed

Galloway thanked residents for contacting her with concerns about the waste collection contract negotiations, with the city council arguing to keep Republic Services and the Mayor arguing for Rizzo Environmental Services, which she states would save the city \$2 million.

Galloway described a meeting Sept. 13 including members of the Mayor's team along with Councilman Scott Kincaid and Council President Kerry Nelson. Also present at that meeting, she said, was Joyce Parker, an emergency financial manager for the city of Ecorse, who was assigned to mediate between the city council and the mayor's administration.

"The process hasn't been as easy and as cooperative as it could be," Galloway stated, "but on Tuesday what they did realize ... is when David Sabuda [the city's chief financial officer] did the calculations it came up that Republic (Services) is actually the lowest bidder."

(In a September 26 town hall hosted by Mayor Weaver, however, Sabuda presented a different set of calculations that showed Rizzo holding the cost advantage. All parties involved were in a Circuit Court-ordered mediation process behind closed doors as of this writing. At the town hall meeting, Weaver stated, as she has from the beginning, that it is her duty by law to go with the "lowest responsible bid" and that she strongly believes the numbers show that Rizzo met that criterion over Republic – Ed.)

Galloway was then asked about the mayor's administration and why, according to the questioner, they seem to be so "wedded" to insure the contract goes to Rizzo Environmental Services that the mayor may enact the emergency ordinance of the charter to initiate service with Rizzo.

(Since the CCNA meeting, the mayor terminated Republic's services as of Sept. 23, but Circuit Court Judge Joseph Farah intervened following a request for an injunction from the city council and put the switch on hold as the two sides were ordered to meet. On Sept. 29, an appeals court overturned Farah again and it now seems the Mayor's side has won and Rizzo will be the city's new trash contractor – Ed.)

Councilwoman Galloway responded, "I would hope that your integrity before the people that you represent would be enough for you to say, you know what, based on the ordinance and the fact that I told this community that I would do what was right ... I just hope

that Mayor Weaver is surrounded by people that are giving her wise counsel and that she listens to Mr. Sabuda and that she goes along with the ordinance and that hopefully there will be no legal proceedings from here."

Fourth Ward Councilwoman Kate Fields also offered news on an initiative to clean up abandoned mobile home parks, specifically Kirkwood Mobile Park on Averill Avenue and Shady Acres on Western Road. Both shut down after tax foreclosures in 2015 and both were owned by the same entity. The need to take action came to Fields, she said, when she saw that Kirkwood was in the middle of a residential area. "Kids are going in there and there are meth labs and in addition to blight, it's a safety issue," she said.

Fields said there is no funding to demolish trailer parks so she aimed for the trailer parks that the Land Bank controls in hopes of obtaining a grant that could fund the initiative. She stated the C.S. Mott Foundation told the Land Bank to submit an application and she believes the Foundation may lean toward funding to demolish the parks.

Legionnaires' disease

Two representatives of the Flint Area Community Health and Environment Partnership (FACHEP), a project prompted by the Flint water crisis and being coordinated through Wayne State University, presented information about Legionnaires' disease.

Paul Kilgore, from Wayne State's Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and Kettering University professor Benjamin Pauli briefed the group on the nature of the disease and its prevalence in Flint. They said the disease is a kind of pneumonia, contracted by breathing in droplets of water that contain Legionella bacteria. The disease has flu-like symptoms such as high fever, cough, difficulty breathing, chest pains, and diarrhea.

Occurrences of the disease in Flint have spiked during the water crisis. The two presenters said Genesee County had 91 cases of Legionnaires' disease during the summers of 2014 and 2015 that led to 12 deaths so far.

The FACHEP team members are studying levels of Legionella bacteria in the water in Genesee County and conducting household samplings. More information about Legionella and Legionnaire's disease is available from Kilgore at dr4775@wayne.edu.

Pierce Park changes ahead?

Doug Jones, a College Cultural resident, spoke about the now-vacant Pierce Park clubhouse, saying, "it seems that the city has taken an interest in Pierce Park with the idea of getting it off of their books — to stop spending money on it."

Jones asserted the city is making an attempt to "privatize" the park by selling it to a private company but there is no guidance to know what the golf course can become or

who can lease it. He stated the city has made a requirement for the request for proposal (RFP) that any use of the facility must also use the 100 adjoining acres.

Jones, a retired architect, said, "There is no deed restriction on the golf course, 100 acres, but there is a deed restriction on the balance of the park. The park must remain a park."

The association's next meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 17, in MCC's RTC Auditorium.

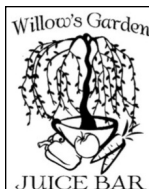
Staff writer Kayla Chappell can be reached at kachappe@umflint.edu.

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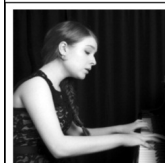
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Book Review

“NOBODY: Casualties of America’s War on the Vulnerable, From Ferguson to Flint and Beyond”

By Robert R. Thomas

In the January 2016 issue of EVM, I wrote a book review of “Demolition Means Progress” (2015) by Andrew Highsmith, a definitive account of the reality of Flint’s last 80 years. The book arrived in my life at a time when I desperately needed to understand the Flint I had returned to in 2005.

Eleven years later, life in Flint has come to a new bend in the river where I needed to reflect and review. Where had we come since Highsmith’s scholarly enlightenments? Where might we be headed?

Along comes Marc Lamont Hill’s “NOBODY: Casualties of America’s War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond” (2016) to fill lots of voids for me.

Hill is a renowned American intellectual and journalist. His reporting from the grounds of Ferguson and Flint is solidly supported by his meticulous scholarly research, as exhibited in the book’s 50 pages of notated documentation.

His preface states: “This is a book about what it means to be Nobody in twenty-first-century America.” He then defines the term: “To be Nobody is to be vulnerable.

To be Nobody is to be subject to State violence. To be Nobody is to also confront systemic forms of State violence.

To be Nobody is to be abandoned by the State. To be Nobody is to be considered disposable.”

The preface concludes with the book’s premise to tell the stories of those marked as Nobodies, spotlight their humanity, and inspire principled action. To do so, Hill fires off a series of LED flashes in the form of seven one-word chapter headings to illuminate his stated goals.

“Nobody,” the first chapter of Hill’s analysis of the casualties of America’s war on the vulnerable, examines what happened in Ferguson to Michael Brown. The line story is well known, but Hill provides an illuminating backstory, including a racial history of East St. Louis, Illinois and St. Louis and Ferguson, Missouri, and their interconnectedness. As Hill writes, “The discourse of race is at once indispensable and insufficient when telling the story of Ferguson and other sites of State-sanctioned violence against Black bodies.”

While I found this backstory revealing, the most chilling illumination of the chapter for me was the grand jury testimony of Darren Wilson, the White policeman who shot and killed Michael Brown.

“‘As he is coming towards me, I...keep telling him to get on the ground,’ the sandy-haired Wilson told the grand jury, using phrases that made him sound like he was a game hunter confronting a wildebeest: ‘He doesn’t. I shoot a series of shots. I don’t know how many I shot, I just know I shot it.’”

Darren Wilson had executed “it.” Nobody. “Broken,” Chapter Two, tells the stories of

the police chokehold killing of Eric Garner on Staten Island for selling “loosies,” single cigarettes; Walter Scott, executed by police officer Michael Slager in North Charleston, SC, who pulled Scott over for having a broken “third taillight” and recorded by a cellphone video; and Sandra Bland’s hanging in a Texas jail, the end result of being pulled over by a Texas state trooper named Brian Encinia for changing lanes without signaling and then being arrested for talking back to him.

While there are remaining questions about the circumstances of their deaths, there is no doubt that all three “ultimately died because of a series of unnecessary actions by the State,” Hill writes. These Nobodies were broken by State power, Hill asserts.

“Bargained” centers on the aftermath of Freddy Gray’s death while in the custody of the Baltimore Police Department and the judicial failures of the plea-bargaining process which, in effect, has given more power to prosecutors than to judges. How this has come to be is the meat of this chapter which concludes, “Nothing has been done to repair a system that prosecutes, judges, and sentences millions of vulnerable citizens with the stroke of a single pen – and without any semblance of justice.”

“Armed” opens with Michael Dunn’s “Stand Your Ground” defense for assassinating unarmed 17-year-old Jordan Davis for playing “that thug music” too loudly in a convenience store parking lot and defying Dunn’s request to turn the volume down. The verbal confrontation with the teens, one of whom was Davis, ended with Dunn, a White software developer, pulling a pistol from his glovebox and firing 10 shots at the adjacent vehicle of unarmed Black teens playing rap music.

There follows an examination of the confluence of “Stand Your Ground,” the NRA and the U.S. Supreme Court in 2008, who dumb-ed down the Second Amendment from “well-regulated militia” to any Tom, Dick or Harriet who could obtain a firearm. It’s Dodge City all over again in America by law.

“If extrajudicial dispute resolution has been sanctioned on our streets, it has a counterpart

on the other side of the spectrum in the gross militarization of our police,” writes Hill. “Even as we have handed some of the responsibility for policing over to the ‘Armed Citizen,’ we have been turning the police themselves into a small-scale army.”

He then cites Washington Post journalist Radley Balko, who describes this militaristic trend in police forces as a development in three stages: response to the Black Power movement and the race riots of the 1960s, prompting a War on Crime; the War on Drugs; and the War on Terror after 9/11. The “war” meme plays big here because, writes Hill, “The police, after all, can fight crime, but you need an army to fight a war.” He adds, “Using the language of war to attack a social problem worked to distort the image of those who suffered, just as propaganda in real wartime serves to distort the image of the enemy into a subhuman monstrosity.”

When you wage a war on neighborhoods and treat citizen homes like occupied territory, collateral damage occurs. Nobodies die, as Hill illustrates with the mistaken assassination by police of 92-year-old Kathryn Johnston in the Bluff neighborhood of Atlanta where she had resided for 17 years, the victim of a misguided unlimited no-knock warrant by police. “Meanwhile,” Hill concludes, “the State-sanctioned war on citizens, guilty and innocent, continues.”

“Caged” highlights the criminal justice system’s mass incarceration of America’s dispos-

(Continued on Page 7.)

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... Strangest

(Continued from Page 3.)

able to generate the enthusiasm that Trump has gotten from his crowds.

• Trump has proven himself to be a master of the media. In spite of his attacks on the press, he has received more free media than any candidate ever has — as much as \$3 billion of unpaid air time.

How could Hillary win?

But even with Trump's surprise showing, Hillary has generally kept a lead over him, and there are good reasons why she could come out on top.

• She has the strongest resume of any candidate for many years. Her roles as first lady, New York senator, secretary of state and informal advisor during the Bill Clinton years give her a wealth of experience that few can equal.

• In the Electoral College, she has a "Blue Wall" of the 18 states (and Washington D.C.) that voted Democratic since 1992. If those states stay with her, they would give her 242 electoral votes, only 28 short of the needed 270 electoral votes to win the White House — a large advantage over the traditionally Republican states. The Republican's "Red Wal," those states that have gone Republican since 1992, is dramatically smaller — 13 states with only 102 electoral votes.

• The list of groups Trump has offended is long — women, African-Americans, Hispanics, Muslims, veterans, the handicapped and many others. Many of those groups have generally voted Democratic, but they will likely be even more energized this year. If the Republican Party expects to grow, those are the very voters they need, especially as the demographics of the country change.

• As the first woman to run for president on a major party ticket, she can expect to do better than average among female voters — and Democrats have usually done well with women voters.

• With Trump's habit of unpredictable, bombastic outbursts and casual connection with facts, Hillary will seem to be the "safer choice" in troubled times.

After the election?

Whoever wins the election, the very nature of this election raises questions for the future.

With the high level of distrust for both candidates, and the highly negative, personal attacks, will either be able to govern? What will the Republican Party look like in the future? Will it remain a conservative bastion or will it become a totally different party? Will the Democrats still be the party of the "working man"? Will the old rules of how we nominate and elect presidents change?

This election may just be the beginning of a series of strange changes.

Political columnist Paul Rozycki can be reached at paul.rozenki@mcc.edu.

... Review

(Continued from Page 6.)

able populations, most of whom are people of color, the poor, the vulnerable. For Hill, the story begins with Nelson Rockefeller's War on Drugs, mandatory sentencing and the State-sanctioned violence of Attica prison in which more Nobodies died at the hands of State power. Like his short tour of the history of the American prison, his history of Attica prison is very enlightening, and another example of the author's scholarly research.

"But the issue of prison privatization is a symptom of a much larger illness," writes Hill. "Whether prisons are publicly or privately administered, mass incarceration itself is largely indebted to an overarching 'prison-industrial complex,' which can be defined as the 'overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social, and political problems.'"

"Emergency" opens with Flint's immiseration and the poisoning of its public water supply at the hands of State power based on profits over people. Hill's focus on Flint and other post-industrial American cities in similar straits examines the economic system under which we all live. Paralleling the current economy with the Gilded Age of America and the era of the Robber Barons, Hill sites historian T.J. Jackson Lears' remark that the disparities of the Gilded Age were the product of a "galloping conscienceless capitalism," which Hill says is an apt "description of our own day."

Hill ends "NOBODY" with the "Somebody" chapter that concludes:

"At every moment in history, oppression has been met with resistance. In every instance

in which the State has consigned the vulnerable to the status of Nobody, The People have asserted that they are, in fact, Somebody. In doing so, they offer hope that another world is indeed possible, that empires eventually fall, and that freedom is closer than we think."

EVM staff writer and columnist Robert R. Thomas can be reached at captze-ro@sbcglobal.net.

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Village Life

City Council meeting a mess of bedlam: is this how Flint reclaims self-rule?

By Jan Worth-Nelson

I just lost my city council virginity.

It wasn't pretty. Like most losses of virginity, it wasn't particularly enjoyable and I'm not sure I want a repeat experience.

Some things get better with practice – and are especially improved by having good partners.

I don't know if I can count on any of that in the city council chambers.

In my 35 years in Flint, including 26 years at the UM-Flint, going to a city council meeting just seemed like something other people did.

I own two homes here, and I have been writing columns about life in Flint for a dozen years. I have documented everything from what it feels like to prepare my taxes to cleaning out my junk drawer to what kinds of trees I see on my many walks around the neighborhood.

But as for that dimly lit, dingy chamber, its rows of brown auditorium seats cracking and

uncomfortable – well, I had always avoided it.

I must have had some healthy protective instinct of what I wasn't missing.

Then, Gary Custer died and I found myself editor of *East Village Magazine*.

As the city struggled with its water crisis, I tried to help EVM cover the travails of our life here, trolling always for the hopeful stories but confused by the continual squabbles between mayor and council. Finally, it seemed like I could no longer, in good conscience, avoid stepping into the city's drama.

As if jinxed by the bad air in the room, my recording of the proceedings won't open for me now and thus I am going from bruised memory. What I'm describing here is therefore short on direct quotes.

I got there early and awkwardly settled myself into one of the unbroken seats in the fourth row. I had brought an apple and nibbled on it nervously to pass the time – as a woman introduced herself and shared some of her thoughts – primarily in defense of the mayor and expressing her perplexity about why the council seemed determined to resist her.

A man came by with the required sheets for signing up to speak. I was happy to help when he said he needed assistance filling it out. He did not know how to spell his last name.

Finally the meeting got under way. Within minutes its features included yelling, shouted accusations. A guy in a yellow shirt also sporting a holstered gun shambled to the podium at the wrong time for public comments. My council representative, Monica Galloway, was loudly attacked by one of the water activists. She attempted to clarify her position later, only to be shouted down again. I'm not saying who was right or wrong – I honestly couldn't tell – but the pitch of it was nerve-racking. I felt overwhelmed by the intricacies of those relationships, obviously predating my arrival on the scene.

Council president Kerry Nelson, who seems like a gentleman, attempted repeatedly to make various calming and clarifying points – for instance, to try to explain to people during a required public hearing for CAPER, lumberingly standing for Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report, that that was not the time for general public comment. But people kept streaming up to the mic anyway to make shouted and emotional points.

One man, after being told three times by the gentle giant council president that the public comment time would come later, looked up and said, "What's CAPER?"

That is just ten minutes' worth of what happened. The rest was much the same.

I know this is a city filled with hurts. The

water crisis has made everything worse, and the primal fears, dangers, illnesses, lying, betrayals by our governing officials have brought so much anger and pain to the surface. And, in fact, the water crisis has helped give voice to so many who needed to be heard. The long-term effect of this outpouring is painful to watch. Sometimes it feels like a genuinely justifiable exercise of righteously indignant democracy.

But still. What happened in the council chambers did not feel like healthy catharsis. It felt like anarchy.

On questions of who is to blame and what to do about it, I am still thinking. I'm new to the wounds. Is it the fault of the council itself? Is it what feels like a proliferating disrespect spread like rancid butter over everything? Is it the failure of public education? The breakdown in civil rhetoric in the nation as a whole?

Here is what I posted, in my city council PTSD, on Facebook later that night:

"I am sorry to say I tried to cover the Flint City Council meeting tonight but after 90 minutes I could not stand to stay another minute in the meeting.

"I am apparently not enough of a reporter to put down my disgust and dismay at the chaos, bedlam, noise, disrespect. I couldn't sort out who stood for what and why it was all happening the way it was."

"This was my first city council meeting in my many years in Flint," I raved on, "and if I had seen this insanity earlier I would have run for the hills."

When I posted about it on Facebook, I received a stream of laments. People said things like "I stopped going because of this," and "I went for two years...it's a tough gig." and "So sad." and "It's been like this for years."

Haven't we just been slapped by having our democracy ripped out from under us? If that democracy we lost was so important, why is it that in practice it looks and feels so tawdry, so fruitless, so chaotic?

As I wrote on Facebook, I am astounded and embarrassed by my city. I don't quite know what to do or say about it. I really do want to keep reporting on the trash story and the water story, but after that night, I feel like I will have to find another way to do so rather than sit through that mess. One needs to try to understand, to learn, to ask: Flint's stories need to be told. In the meantime, however, it feels truly, deeply horrifying. Participatory democracy, and Flint's ability to do anything to save itself – is in deep trouble if this is the way it has fallen apart.

EVM editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

COLUMBIA

(Upon learning that shuttle debris was for sale on eBay, Feb. 1, 2003)
by Grayce Scholt

I'm very young. I'm holding father's hand.
We're running toward Mylander's field
to where an Army biplane,
nosed into his corn;
black smoke curls from out the shaft
that held propeller,
sheered. Shoulder wings
are slumped against the earth.

Around us on the ground are
splinters, canvas shreds,
strut-wire sprawl, the
stink of oil, of gas, and
men are shouting, running
round and round.

One stops to pick up
metal strips, another
slivers, red-white-blue
or raw.

I stoop to pick up one small stick,
but father jerks me back
and we go home.

Grayce Scholt is a retired English professor from Mott College who wrote art reviews for the Flint Journal. Her book of poetry, Bang! Go All the Porch Swings, is available online from Amazon. A personal narrative of the poet's life in Europe in the early 1950s, Vienna, Only You, is available at gscholt09@comcast.net. The author's new book of poems, Night Song, is available from Friesen Press (www.friesenpress.com) and Amazon.