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Magazine

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East Village Magazine

Vol. LIII No. 11 December 2015

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Layout by Ted Nelson. Printing by Riegle Press Inc., 1282 N. Gale Rd., Davison, Mich. 48423.

The *East Village Magazine* is a program of the Village Information Center Inc., a nonprofit corporation. We welcome material from readers, but all submissions become the property of the publication and if published will be edited to conform to the editorial style and policies of the publication. All inquiries about the publication should be mailed to *East Village Magazine*, Village Information Center, 720 E. Second St., Flint, Mich. 48503. Distribution is the second Saturday of each month. Display advertising rates are \$34.00 a column-inch plus any other costs. Unclassified ads are \$2.50 a printed line or part of a printed line. Rates subject to change without notice. The deadline for advertising is 10 days before each publication date.

Editorial *How about some help?*

By Jan Worth-Nelson

A year ago, just two issues before he died, our founder and late publisher Gary Custer wrote an editorial asking for contributions to *East Village Magazine*.

He asked, "Is there still a place for *East Village Magazine*, or are we a dinosaur that should fade into history?"

As *EVM* heads into its 40th year and the end of our first year without Gary, we find ourselves thinking hard about all that – about who and what we are – and, perhaps most importantly, why we are.

Gary's November 2014 editorial both captures important *EVM* history and his last appeal to you, our cherished readers, for support.

We excerpt from his appeal to you here, hoping that you will remember us in your end-of-year charitable gifts.

To make it easier, we have just added a PayPal option online for safe electronic giving. If this is how you wish to give, please go to eastvillagemagazine.org and click on the prominent "Donate" button.

Here is what Gary said, with updated information added where needed.

"*East Village Magazine* was begun in 1976 as an information co-operative, a group of people working together to provide the group some of the information they needed to protect and improve their neighborhood.

"Each person was to provide something to accomplish the goals of the group – volunteer some of the time, contribute some of the money or provide information needed to produce *East Village Magazine*. Some provided more, some provided less – depending on what they could do....

"The information in *East Village Magazine* continues to be brought to you by our readers' contributions of time, money and information as it was in 1976. A lot has happened in those 620 issues [now 632], but the issues are the same.

"Our information cooperative still continues to provide fair and accurate coverage of Flint and neighborhood affairs."

[In 2015, for example, we have provided neighborhood coverage by Managing Editor Nic Custer, Ashley O'Brien, Andrew Keast and now several new staff writers including Stacie Scherman, Re'Shae Sneed and Anne Trelfa. We have offered columns by Paul Rozycki, Teddy Robertson, Jack Minore and Robert Thomas along with the Village Life column I produce most months. There are monthly poems by Grayce Scholt as well.]

"About 45 or 50 people distribute the magazine each month to see that you get it at your door – their names are in the masthead.

"These are the people in the co-op who contribute the 500 to 700 hours needed to produce the magazine each month – a continuation of the tradition begun in 1976."

[The website, eastvillagemagazine.org, is coming back after a major break last spring; thanks to the patient work of our tech consultant Dean Paxton we are back in business with a new design and many new options — work on that continues.]

"The second group of people in the co-op were the people who contributed the money. We don't ask them to contribute the full amount needed to pay for the magazine (about \$3,000 a month) because we spend the time to reach the people who will pay to advertise in *East Village Magazine* and look for individual or foundation support to sustain our activities. We just ask them to pay for what the advertising does not."

"In 1976, we were able to begin the magazine with a \$5,000 grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation under Project USE that granted \$5,000 to each elementary school community council – Walker School for us.

"After 38 [now almost 40] years, the only two projects to survive from Project USE from the Walker School Community Council are many of the trees that shade Central Park and *East Village Magazine*.

"Through the years we have been helped by bequests from Grace Lytle, Archie Campbell [and Bessie Brown], and grants from the Ruth Mott Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation have helped make up funding for new services and pay some of the difference between our costs and income.

"Our advertising has increased in the past five years. But *EVM* still depends on the people in the second part of the co-op – the contributors – because the cost of production has increased tremendously. "We cannot pay for an 8- or 12-page magazine with ads. It would take more than three pages of ads to do so – far too many..."

"We cannot depend on a grant and we cannot depend on increased advertising to pay the costs of production. The deadline for a tax-deduction for contributing to *EVM* will soon be here.

"But let's face it – few, if any, people contribute to *EVM* for the tax deduction. It's just a bonus for the average person.

(Continued on Page 5.)

Cover:

A winter walk on Woodlawn Park



Photo of the Month: Whaley House Nov. 30 (see related story p. 10)

Photograph by Edwin D. Custer

After 10 years of Land Bank efforts, Flint a demolition “rock star”

By Nic Custer

More than 890 Genesee County Land Bank-owned homes in Flint will be demolished over the next two years thanks to \$11.45 million recently authorized from a final round of Michigan State Housing and Development Authority’s Hardest Hit Fund.

This will bring Flint’s total amount of Hardest Hit funds up to \$34.15 million since 2013 and will lead to at least 2,666 demolished properties.

Christina Kelly, Land Bank director of planning and neighborhood revitalization, said the organization will have 18 months to spend the money. The funds will also pay the Land Bank a 5-year property maintenance fee and a \$500 administration fee for each property.

Flint’s initial \$20.1 million round of Hardest Hit money was expected to fund 1,600 demolitions and ended up demolishing 1,776 properties through \$2.6 million in additional funds targeting Civic Park.

In the current round of funding, 900 properties will be identified for demolition and an additional 150 properties will be on a backup list in case there are extra funds available.

The Land Bank recently observed its 10th anniversary, and though its work has occasionally drawn criticism locally, its successes consistently draws praise from

state and federal funders, Kelly said.

Flint does it cheaper

Four other Michigan cities, Pontiac, Detroit, Saginaw and Grand Rapids, received initial Hardest Hit funds for demolitions. Compared to these other cities, Flint spends \$11,600 on average per demolition. This figure is on par with other Michigan cities and much less than the \$25,000 maximum allowed for each demolition through Hardest Hit. Kelly said a demolition price is based on the local conditions and contractors.

She credits Flint’s efficient use of funds to the abilities of demolition contractors, low prices to dispose of waste at local dumps, the recycling of concrete, cheap access to backfill dirt and a quick turnaround in payment to contractors.

She also said Detroit, for example, may have higher prices for demolitions because they have larger structures and more buildings made of brick.

Demolition involves many steps

The demolition process can take several months before properties are ready to be torn down. A list of properties is first given to Consumers Energy and the water department to cut utilities. Then a demolition inspection and an environmental survey are done to identify asbestos and other hazards in the house. Properties are abated as needed and then

demolished. Kelly said Consumers Energy only has a limited number of employees that can do utility cuts so the process will take a while to complete on all 890 properties.

Kelly said there are 1,055 properties in structurally deficit condition within the targeted funding areas. These areas have been selected based on the Hardest Hit funding criteria.

The funding area includes so-called “tipping point” neighborhoods, buffer areas around those neighborhoods and main corridors. A tipping point neighborhood is one that officials predict could potentially stabilize if the blight was removed.

“If we have a stronger market area and it’s surrounded by blight, it will only be a matter of time for the blight to spread. We covered a large portion of the city between the tipping point areas, the buffer zones and the corridors,” Kelly said.

Kelly said as the list is finalized in coming weeks the information will be available publicly on the Land Bank website, thelandbank.org.

Many blighted buildings remain

When the Hardest Hit funds are finally depleted, a significant number of the approximately 5,500 blighted buildings in the city will end up being demolished. But Kelly said, “there are a lot of properties in

(Continued on Page 5.)

... Land Bank

(Continued from Page 4.)

poor condition that we are not able to get to.”

She said although the program targets “structurally deficit” buildings, “poor condition” properties are also blighting neighborhoods. The Land Bank will work with the city to prioritize the list of poor condition properties they own to prepare for potential future demolition funding.

Properties are initially selected for demolition based on the city’s housing condition inventory, which rates buildings on their condition from structurally deficit to good. The Land Bank does their own update inspections on properties and, sporadically, they will update records based on complaints or city inspections.

Since Hardest Hit funding began, the Land Bank has hired its own demolition inspector who holds contractors to fix work that is not done well. Previously, the city did final inspection for demolition. While the city does still inspect the houses, the funding stipulates that the Land Bank must make sure the contractor addresses any outstanding issues before the demolition is closed.

Once the job is finalized, it takes at least three months before the vacant lot can be adopted. Kelly said that right now there is a backlog of applications to purchase side lots but the Land Bank is willing to take lease or adoption applications as soon as the final list of properties is released to the public.

Clover plantings better than grass

She said planting clover instead of low mow grass on vacant lots has worked well, and the Land Bank is pleased with the appearance of it compared to the grass that is easily outcompeted by weeds. The clover costs about the same to plant as grass but it is more in line with the Land Bank’s current schedule of mowing once or twice per year and prevents dumping because it’s so short. Over time, the clover saves money, reducing the need to mow and clean up trash.

Other alternative plantings have been considered including ornamental trees that helped with water retention. But Kelly said after getting specs done with the EPA, they determined it was too expensive. She said they may seek additional funding to pay for tree plantings.

Flint a demolition “rock star”

Kelly said the Land Bank is doing the best it can with what it has but it is always looking for more resources. She said there are no additional demolition funding programs available at the moment but Flint has built up a lot of goodwill and faith at state and federal levels. She even said a grant manager at MSHDA called the city

“rockstars of Hardest Hit,” and said Flint gets the work done and gets it done well.

That goodwill keeps the possibility open for future funding. In the last round of Hardest Hit funding, Flint requested additional funding after completing its contracts, and was given \$560,000 in reprogrammed funds to have 42 emergency demolitions added to the list.

The city’s blight framework, which came out of the master plan process, is helpful for laying out the scale and scope of the problem and saying this is how the city can accomplish pieces of it. By providing the data to state lawmakers, they are better able to make a funding argument for Flint.

Land Bank staff credit Kildee

Kelly said she is grateful for Congressman Dan Kildee (Fifth District) because blight is not a topic many people are willing to take on. Kildee helped start the Land Bank a decade ago. “We don’t have to pitch and make a case and explain, we can just send a quick email,” Kelly said. “It’s great having that ally, and having someone understand the challenge.”

Hardest Hit funds only pay for residential demolitions but Kelly said she made Kildee aware that commercial demos are a priority going forward. These demolitions can be expensive and there are often environmental contamination issues that can be complicated to deal with.

The Hardest Hit Fund is a portion of the 2008 federal Troubled Asset Relief Fund, which was created to help homeowners avoid foreclosure. \$3.2 billion of the original Hardest Hit Fund was unspent and reprogrammed nationwide.

Documentary observes 10 Land Bank years

The Land Bank just released a documentary online to celebrate its 10-year anniversary. Kelly said there are misperceptions about what the Land Bank does in the community and it gets a lot of complaints for holding vacant properties. She encouraged residents to watch the video and get a better sense of what the Land Bank does. The video is available to watch free on the Land Bank’s website.

Nic Custer, East Village Magazine managing editor, can be reached at NicEastvillage@gmail.com.

Volunteer Distributors Wanted

The East Village Magazine is looking for volunteer distributors in some of the residential blocks bounded by E. Court, Franklin, Tuscola and Meade Streets. Spend less than one hour a month getting exercise and insuring your neighbors get the magazine. Contact ecuster@sbcglobal.net or write to 720 E. Second St. Flint, MI 48503

... Help

(Continued from Page 3.)

Those who contribute do so because they appreciate the information we have provided to help them preserve and improve their neighborhoods and our chronicling of Flint during the past [39] years.

“Were we naïve? Is there still a place for *East Village Magazine* or are we a dinosaur that should fade into history?”

Gary asserted that the *Flint Journal* was a “faint image of what it used to be.” He said television is “primarily concerned with the crime of the day and puff pieces for the group with the most skilled public relations staff or that yells the loudest.”

And, he contended last year, “most importantly, you have no say in your city government in this wasteland of citizens’ rights run by the current Snyder-appointed city manager.” [We think Gary would be turning over in his grave as our 2015 water crisis unfolded.]

And so, Gary concluded,

“Flint needs *East Village Magazine*.”

“We are depending on you, the people who are the contributors, to get us through.

“If it has been a year or so since you contributed, we would like you back. If you are a current contributor we would appreciate a little extra money this year. Write a check and make it as big as you can.

“We are not ready to end *East Village Magazine* anytime soon, but your choice to help or not to help could ensure that we can continue.

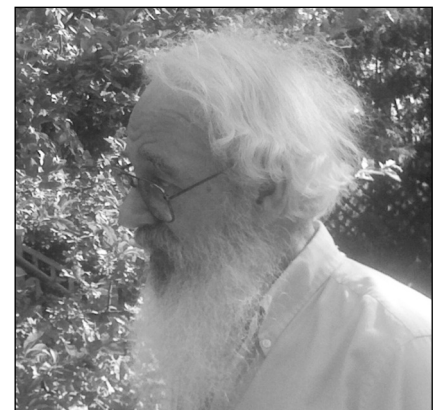
“We depended on you in the beginning.

“We depend on you now.”

Gary’s words absolutely still ring true. We hope we can depend on you.

And it can be very easy by clicking on the “Donate” button at eastvillagemagazine.org. Thank you, dear readers, and have a Happy Holiday.

Jan Worth-Nelson is the editor of East Village Magazine. She can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.



Gary Custer, EVM Founder

Commentaries

The 12 (or 13) Days of Christmas – A wish list for Mayor Weaver

By Paul Rozycki

As Mayor Karen Weaver begins her first 100 days in office with a list of ambitious plans for the city, she and the citizens of Flint have a long list of hopes for the upcoming holiday season and beyond.

In that light, here's a proposed wish list for Flint's new mayor. May we all find our stockings filled with these wishes granted in the 12 days of Christmas!

On the First Day of Christmas:

Let's hope Mayor Weaver finds the most competent and insightful advisors under her tree. With all of Flint's problems, no person can do it all. Let's hope the mayor is able to pull the best and the brightest staffers together for the city. The challenges she faces will demand the best of all of them (and us.)

On the Second Day of Christmas:

Let's hope that Mayor Weaver will be able to bridge the racial divisions that have been a part of Flint politics for so many years. One look at the voting results of November's election revealed the same racially divided voting pattern that has been part of Flint's politics for most of the last 40 years of mayoral elections. While there were many individual exceptions, the heavily African American precincts generally went for Weaver. The white wards and precincts generally went for Dayne Walling.

On the Third Day of Christmas:

I hope that she is able to reach out to the Flint community in the broadest geographical sense. Let's hope her campaign promise of reaching out to uptown, downtown and around town, will bear fruit. For too long there has been the feeling that the progress of the downtown has come at the expense of the neighborhoods around town. The fact that the Ruth Mott Foundation is reaching out to the north end may be a step in the right direction.

On the Fourth Day of Christmas:

Let's also hope that there will be a willingness to give the new mayor the support she needs, both from those who supported her and those who supported Dayne Walling. While this was a hard fought campaign, it's time to put the division and rancor aside and work for the best interests of the whole city, whoever you supported in the election.

On the Fifth Day of Christmas:

Let's also hope that those who didn't vote and didn't support anyone in the past election, (and more than 80% didn't vote) will find a reason to get involved in making the city better.

On the Sixth Day of Christmas:

Let's hope that our new mayor will be able to find the grants and funding sources--state, federal and private---to put

the city on track to restore a solid financial footing and keep it there for what will continue to be challenging times in the future.

On the Seventh Day of Christmas:

And let's hope that a solid financial horizon will finally allow the city to govern itself after so many years of emergency managers, transition boards and state-imposed administrators.

On the Eighth Day of Christmas:

In that same light, let's also hope that Mayor Weaver and City Administrator Natasha Henderson are able to decide who is really running the city. There's nothing wrong with having a city manager, but that issue should be decided by those who write and adopt the city charter, not the state.

On the Ninth Day of Christmas:

Similarly, let's also hope that the Charter Revision Commission will produce a workable document to run a genuinely self-governed city.

On the Tenth Day of Christmas:

Let's also hope that the next year will see a resolution of Flint's water crisis. Certainly a full solution is a long way down the road, but let's hope that the switch back to Detroit water and then the opening of the Karegnondi pipeline, will start to show a genuine improvement in Flint's water — an improvement that we can trust.

On the Eleventh Day of Christmas:

Let's also hope that Mayor Weaver can begin to reach out to the outlying cities, villages and townships in Genesee County and find genuine cooperation. Let's also hope that the communities outside of Flint are willing to reach back and work with the city. In the final analysis we are all in this together, and both the city of Flint and the suburbs need to cooperate more than they have in the past.

On the Twelfth Day of Christmas:

And most importantly, let's hope that Mayor Weaver can restore the sense of trust in government. She will need that trust as she makes the difficult decisions to rebuild (or build) the new Flint. Though many were critical of her lack of political experience, let's hope that her skill as a psychologist may give her a personal touch and an advantage over many of the political leaders and office holders who doubted her ability. Let's hope Flint can regain the confidence and trust it needs to make a comeback.

On the Thirteenth Day of Christmas: (OK, so there's an extra one.)

Finally, for the good of the city, for all

of us, for this holiday season, let's give Mayor Weaver the gift of our support, and let's hope this proves to be the 12 days (or the 100 days) that turned Flint around.

Paul Rozycki is a retired professor of political science from Mott Community College. He has lived in Flint since 1969 and has been involved with and observed Flint politics for many years. He is author of Politics and Government in Michigan (with Jim Hanley) and A Clearer Image: The History of Mott Community College. He can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu.

Flint village revival

By Bob Thomas

Flint continues to amaze my elderly, crusty, skeptical soul with the spiritual resilience of its populace.

At high noon on Monday, Nov. 9, 2015, Flint's first female mayor was sworn in before a packed, enthusiastic house. Mayor Karen Williams Weaver's African-American heritage and distinguished Flint lineage adds to her historical and populist appeal.

But the Flint revivalism I witnessed in City Hall was about more than history and a new mayor; it was one of the results of dogged citizen interventionism. This village revival story is not about change at the top; it is about a bottom-up populist uprising that would not be dissuaded from speaking truth to authority.

For months all the local and state authorities turned deaf ears to the citizen protests that the river water was tainted.

Thanks to some very strong and persistent Flint women, the coalition of Concerned Pastors, the citizen water coalition and the pediatrician at Hurley who proved the river water was indeed spiking the lead levels in babies, the uprising prevailed. Common citizens had stood their ground armed with science to disarm the political and economic Kool-Aid promoted by failed leadership.

The game was up, but the damage will be prolonged.

Imagine how much worse it could have become without citizen intervention.

It takes the villagers to raise a town.

Bob Thomas is an EVM board member. He disappeared in San Francisco for 35 years, only to reappear a decade ago as a retired resident of Flint's Central Park village where he found true love and a new home.

Home sales trends, blight efforts and water concerns raised at CCNA

By Anne Trelfa and Re'Shae Sneed

Real estate market reports, blight elimination efforts, and ongoing water concerns highlighted the November meeting of the College Cultural Neighborhood Association at Mott Community College's RTC Auditorium.

President Mike Keeler facilitated the meeting attended by about 30 residents.

Home sales slow but consistent

Mark Fisher, from Grant Hamady Realtors, offered a real estate report, concluding the market remains consistent with data from the past three years even though "sales have been slow. Water issues have not helped." He said 11 homes sold in the last two months, 15 houses are currently pending and inventory is stable. Distressed home numbers are up slightly, he reported, and price per foot has slipped some as it did last year around this time.

Keeler added, "It's always something with Flint." Keeler said his opinion is that negative news stories on Flint persist. But, he asserted, the CCNA has been equally persistent. "Since 1992 we have been dedicated to preserving and improving our urban neighborhood and our city," he said.

Demolitions on the way

City Blight Coordinator Raul Garcia informed the group that 980 homes owned by the Genesee County Land Bank will be demolished soon. The work will be paid for with \$11.45 million in Michigan State

Housing and Development Authority's Hardest Hit funds. [See related Land Bank story, p. 4]

Garcia explained the process homes go through before being considered for demolition including attempts first to preserve, repair and resell the home. He informed residents that more information about the City of Flint's Blight Elimination and Neighborhood Stabilization is available at the City of Flint website (www.cityofflint.com) To report blight issues, Garcia's direct line is 810-237-2090.

While CCNA members reported blight to Garcia, most of the meeting focused on ways to improve the neighborhood, including the 50/50 Sidewalk Replacement Program several members reported participating in.

The program is offered by the City to work with residents to replace or install new sidewalks in Flint: the City pays half and residents pay half of the cost. Information on the 50/50 program is available at the City's Public Works department website (www.cityofflint.com) or at (810)766-7343.

Water filters, monitoring urged

In the water discussion, Keeler urged residents to continue monitoring and filtering their water. He said filters cost about \$100 a year but urged residents to make the investment if they haven't already. CCNA Vice President Sherry Hayden noted that while many residents have been boiling their water for cooking or other daily uses, "boiling water con-

centrates the lead" and therefore isn't advisable.

Several residents asserted that Flint's water was better in the '60s, and that Flint originally got its water from the Flint River.

Ward 4 City Councilman Joshua Freeman stated, "It was never a river problem. It was the way it was treated." He stated Flint has had water issues for over a decade, whether from the Flint River or old pipes susceptible to corrosion.

In a follow-up conversation after the meeting, Keeler said he expects lawsuits about the water situation are likely to be aimed at the State of Michigan, not toward the city. Residents were offered a number to call to get their water tested free of charge: (810)787-6537.

The next CCNA meeting is set for 7-9 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 21, 2016, in MCC's RTC Auditorium.

Student staff writer Anne Trelfa can be reached at anlange@umflint.edu. Student staff writer Re'Shae Sneed can be reached at rsneed@umflint.edu.

**COLLEGE CULTURAL
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**Neighborhood Watch meets Thurs.,
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**Members meet Thurs., Jan. 21, 2016
7-9 pm in MCC's RTC Auditorium**

Neighborhood safety, "problem" houses persist as Central Park issues

By Stacie Scherman

Blight and safety concerns were the primary focus of the November Central Park Neighborhood Association (CPNA) meeting. Thirteen attendees also discussed other neighborhood projects and held an election.

Norma Sain, executive director of the Court Street Village Non-Profit Housing Corporation, provided the blight committee's updated "problem house list" that included reported squatters at 713 Pierson St. and 710 E. Third St. and one burned-out home at 807 East St. There appeared to be no activity at the burned home since its fire a month earlier.

The safe committee also reported on recent break-ins, including repeated incidents at one residence at Court Street between Thomson and Pierson streets.

Sain reported the resident provided a description of the suspects to police and neighbors. She said the resident believed the same suspects were responsible for all of the break-ins at her home, and that they stole jewelry and clothes. Two other houses, one on Thomson Street and one on Crapo Street also had reported break-ins.

Corridor borders limit help for CPNA

Prior to the meeting, Sain said, she met with Raymond Hall, director of UM-Flint Department of Public Safety (DPS), to discuss how the Department's new Urban Safety Corps Program may help with Central Park's blight and crime issues.

According to the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) website, the program, created through a grant from

the United Way of Genesee County, aims to "reduce crime, build community, and eliminate blight along Flint's University Avenue Corridor (UAC)."

However, Sain said Hall explained the Central Park neighborhood is not part of the program's jurisdiction that includes University Avenue but not Kearsley Street. The University Avenue Corridor runs west of UM-Flint, and the Central Park section of Kearsley Street runs east of campus.

Sain said that she told Hall, "I don't get it. We have 65% rentals and a lot of your students in this neighborhood and you seriously wouldn't come over the bridge and add two blocks?"

Ed Custer, outgoing president of CPNA, added that "there is a Kearsley connection too [between Kettering and

(Continued on Page 9.)

Vintage films capture Atwood football memories

By Lawrence R. Gustin

Editor's note: In Part Two of Larry Gustin's account of the historic Flint Thanksgiving games that spanned nearly 50 years at Atwood Stadium, he describes how film footage of 35 of the classic contests was found and preserved.

When plans surfaced a few years ago to restore Atwood Stadium, I came up with an idea to help: find films of the great Central-Northern high school football games held there every Thanksgiving from 1930, when the stadium opened, until the late 1970s, when the Turkey Day series ended, and offer them for sale to the public on behalf of the stadium authority.

It wouldn't be a personal money maker – in fact it would cost me. But if some company would transfer old football films to DVDs without charge, avoiding a big expense, I would work to market them to the public for \$25, split evenly between that firm and the Atwood restoration group.

Sales probably would make peanuts for stadium restoration but game films would now be available to the public. Atwood's heritage would be emphasized while restoration money was being raised.

But is there a bigger reason to preserve old football films? One is that Flint has produced many athletes who became famous. For five decades their early performances were often preserved only in football films – particularly those on Thanksgiving. Also those games are graphic reminders of how much sports and Atwood Stadium meant to those who lived here in the mid 20th century.

Of course, there were details. Did many films exist, could they be found, could they be used? I did know a little about old Turkey Day films. I had been a sports writer at the *Flint Journal* starting in 1960 and noticed a few of the old 16-mm. Thanksgiving films gathering dust on a file cabinet in the sports department. The *Journal* had begun filming the game around the end of World War II. Typically the films would be in demand at first. But after they were seen a few times, interest would diminish. However, nobody was throwing them away, either.

So, fast forwarding about 40 years to around 2005, when I mentioned my idea of using the films to a young *Journal* sports writer, Dan Nilsen, he said he knew the ones I remembered still existed at the

paper, at the bottom of a file drawer. The next day, at the Buick Open, he brought them to me. Now I had a small number of Thanksgiving films to build a collection around.

One was of the particularly exciting 1953 game. Northern's Art Johnson (whose grandson would be 2009 Heisman Trophy winner Mark Ingram), facing 4th down and 14 with 66 seconds left and trailing 13-9, caught a short pass and zig-zagged 43 yards for the winning TD.

and we would promote them for sale in news interviews and fliers. We got approval of the *Journal* and the Flint School District to use their films and then began looking for more. Dan Nilsen produced big stories on the search for the movies and even posing me with a film canister in the middle of the stadium. Randy Conat did Channel 12 interviews with the field as backdrop.

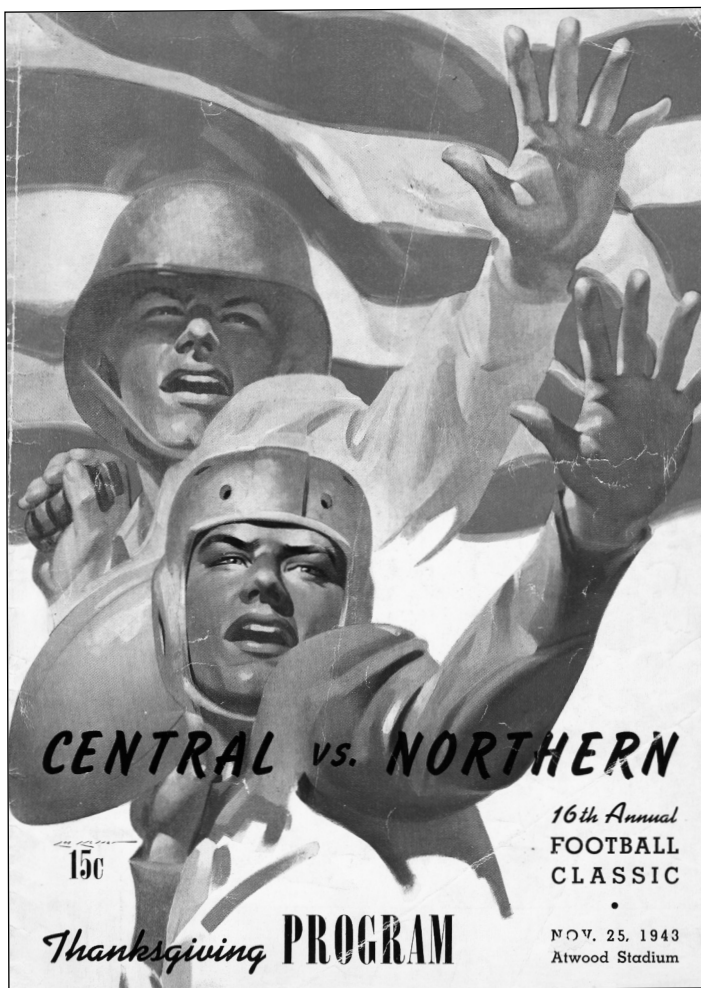
The quest became fun. Over several years of diligent searches, we found films of about

30 games from as early as 1938. Those helping find them included Norm Bryant, Ron Sack, Jeff Whitely, and Dean Yeotis. Old game movies, silent and unedited, came from Central's Nap LaVoie Fieldhouse, from Northern, from former coaches and players. We sought home movies that might have been taken by folks in the seats. Several from amateurs appeared to have been taken during the war and one in 1954. Two of my home movies made the collection, brief footage of the dark and rainy 1957 game and good film of the "Mud Bowl" (described last month) ten years later. But two memorable moments in halftime shows were missed – in 1962 when a little pig wearing Central colors was smuggled into the game, allegedly in a Northern bandsman's sousaphone case, and disrupted a Central formation, and in 1965 when a tuba player dropped his instrument, was too embarrassed to immediately pick it up and marched off the field empty-handed. It sat forlornly in the mud at midfield for a few painful minutes before he retrieved it. From 1946, we do have a minute of sound. The announcer, probably Bob Reynolds at WFDF, describes a touchdown with cheering crowds and band music in the background. Two radio stations

and later local TV sometimes covered the games but that was the only sound we ever found.

A few printed programs surfaced. During World War II, a cover illustration depicted a quarterback throwing a pass with a soldier behind him throwing a hand grenade. Well, many of the players that year would have been headed into the military immediately after graduation. A program was found from the very first game, in 1928, the only one played at Central's Dort Field. It was a small typewritten pamphlet

(Continued on Page 9.)



1943 program cover: it was wartime – note the grenade

In a wild finish, Central stormed back and completed a pass to the Northern one as the game ended with a 15-13 Northern victory. I had that game converted onto a DVD. Local TV anchorman Bill Harris kindly agreed to narrate my written copy and cut and paste the video into what I saw as a wonderful color highlights film with slow motion and stop action of key plays.

Vidcam, a film-to-video conversion house in Grand Blanc, agreed to convert any Thanksgiving game films we could find to DVD – a \$150-per-game savings –

... Atwood

(Continued from Page 8.)

of eight pages with ads and lineups from each school, handed down by 1931 Northern grad Delilah (Ream) McDonough to her daughter Carolyn (McDonough) MacDonald, who lives in the College and Cultural neighborhood.

We even had home movies of the 50th anniversary Nostalgia Bowl, which several of us at the Flint Journal created after the series was shifted to a Friday night following 49 years on Thanksgiving. The idea was to open Atwood one more time on Thanksgiving and invite all the old players, and those who had wanted to play, for a touch football game on the 50th anniversary of the first one. It drew 296 players from as early as 1928 and several thousand fans.

Within several years we had collected film of about 30 of the games converted to DVDs and on sale. But four key games were missing – 1947 through 1950. In 1947, Central was undefeated state champion. In 1948, the teams tied for the only time, and among star players were Central's Don Coleman and Northern's Leo Sugar. The '49 game would make for spectacular film as 11 inches of snow virtually buried Atwood, requiring tractors to constantly plow the sidelines. Despite those conditions, Northern's Leroy Bolden scored twice, his teammate Ellis Duckett also starred and Central sophomore back Tony Branoff, a future star, made good yardage.

As I mentioned last month, the 1950 game had drawn the biggest crowd ever, 20,600, with Bolden running 79 yards for the winning touchdown in the last three minutes. As a Central fan, I was devastated by that run, but couldn't find it, neither the game film nor Bolden's run.

Finally, Ken Moore, a fellow reporter at the *Journal*, gave me a clue. He had held the ball for Central's extra point that tied the 1950 score, 13-13, just before Bolden's winning run. Later that year, he was showing the film at Central to a group when the film broke just before Bolden on film broke loose. With no one to fix the break, Moore walked out. My thought was, maybe that film and a few others were still at Central.

The week Central closed for good, I went to the school, found the principal, Janice Davis, and told her I thought the missing game films might still be there, in some obscure room or drawer. Skeptics thought that was ridiculous, and anyway film that old would be ruined. But Ms. Davis launched a search and there they were – forgotten on a shelf in a former coach's locked office, but still in great condition after 60 years. There was the

1947 Central state championship. The 1948 tie. The big snow of 1949. And finally, the prize – the 1950 film, with a noticeable blip where Ken Moore's film break had been repaired. Leroy Bolden's famous 79-yard run had survived. I could see it, over and over, for the first time since that cold Turkey Day in 1950. It no longer seemed so devastating.

Today I'm sitting on DVDs of 35 Thanksgiving games, those after 1951 in color. (By the way, the films can still be ordered from Vidcam – phone 810 694-0996 or craig@vidcamproductions.com) Missing is footage of the 1963 game, the only one I ever covered for the *Journal*.

College games were all played on Thanksgiving that year, instead of the previous Saturday, because President Kennedy had been assassinated a day earlier. The *Journal's* hired cameraman was busy – he regularly filmed Michigan State football, and that day he was covering the Spartans.

It gave me a sense of accomplishment to find and preserve game films from those early years and make them available to the public. So many of Flint's greatest athletes can be seen performing – back to Northern's "Wonder Boys" of the 1930s, Central's Lynn Chandnois and Don Coleman of the '40s, Viking Coach Guy Houston, Central Coach Howard Auer ... even film I shot of two *Flint Journal* sports editors, Harry Dayton, who covered the first Thanksgiving games, and Doug Mintline, who covered many of the rest after 1949, engaged in a press box conversation – maybe only interesting to a sports writer. Some day, I'll add my whole Thanksgiving games collection to my automotive and Flint archives at Sloan Museum.

I have one of the very few scrapbooks of newspaper clippings of every Flint Thanksgiving game. But I do have one regret. I spent much of my life trying to capture Flint history in newspaper articles and books. Yet I've not been able to find anyone who knows how to edit DVDs and will help me pull together the story of the Flint Thanksgiving games. It would be quite a video to package up important moments by Flint's greatest athletes in a half-hour film. Maybe we'll still get it done, but I'm running out of time.

Lawrence R. Gustin wrote the award-winning first biographies of General Motors founder Billy Durant (1973, updated 1984 and 2008) and Buick founder David Buick (2006, revised 2011 and 2013). He created The Flint Journal Centennial Picture of Flint in three editions in the U.S. Bicentennial year of 1976 and co-authored The Buick: A Complete History in six editions between 1980 and Buick's centennial in 2003. He and his wife Rose Mary now live in Oakland County and have two sons and five grandchildren.

... Central Park

(Continued from Page 7.)

Mott College]... so when they talk about these corridors, I envision Kearsley as being an important corridor to deal with."

UM-Flint safety options "political"

Sain went on to recount Hall's response that "it is political" and has to do with neighborhood partners like UM-Flint, Kettering, Hurley Medical Center, and United Way. Sain said that Hall envisions beginning with University Avenue, working to make an impact there, and then later expanding into the Central Park neighborhood.

Karen Tipper, incoming president of CPNA, reported that the investor's committee has been working to combat blight through its paint project initiative. Tipper explained the committee is working on a grant proposal to partially fund the exterior painting of houses in the Central Park neighborhood. Participation would be voluntary, and Tipper estimated that homeowners would pay around 50% of costs.

Sain added, "part of what was important to us, because this neighborhood is 65 percent rental, is to try to find a venue that brings landlords to the table, you know, an incentive, so that they're actually willing to sit down and talk."

The project is planned for spring 2016. The majority of the grant would be managed by Court Street Village Non-Profit Housing Corporation, she said, adding that CPNA does not have the non-profit status necessary to write and receive grants.

Demolition funds available

Sain also proposed that the CPNA Blight Committee should meet to select a list of homes to recommend for demolition. According to a Detroit Free Press article on Oct. 28, Flint recently received an additional \$11.4 million from the Michigan State Housing Authority's Hardest Hit Fund for blight demolition. [See related story p. 4] The homes must be owned by the Land Bank to qualify for demolition.

Other blight reduction initiatives discussed included signs and flyers informing neighborhood residents to bag their leaves and a proposal to expand the Riverside Tabernacle playscape.

The meeting concluded with an election of officers. Karen Tipper was elected president and Ed Custer was elected vice-president.

Student staff writer Stacie Scherman can be reached at sscherman@umflint.edu.

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Crews, supporters determined to save, restore Whaley Historic House

By Jan Worth-Nelson

Cleanup crews, conservators, restoration experts and numerous volunteers and supporters of the Whaley Historic House Museum have been busy almost around the clock since the beloved Kearsley Street mansion accidentally caught fire and partially burned Nov. 30.

Whaley board member David White, president of the Genesee County Historical Society and until recently director of the Kettering University Archives, said about 40 people came forward immediately to help clean up the mess, including employees from the Sloan Museum, Applewood, Kettering and the UM-Flint.

They attempted to rescue hundreds of books and other artifacts from the house's second and third floors. White said lots of books, quilts, textiles were

Conservation Center took the Whaley furniture and all artwork to be cleaned, White said.

A team from Interstate Restoration, an emergency response and reconstruction service, has been on site since the fire, according to Thomas Henthorn, president of the Whaley House board of trustees.

White said within the first 24 to 48 hours the restoration team had removed many priceless artifacts from the house, fixed the furnace and replaced the hot water heater flooded by water. Huge fans and dehumidifiers were working day and night in the hours after the incident, he said.

White said a spark originated from roofing contractors cleaning up for the day. He said after taking their tools to their truck they went back around the house and noticed smoke coming from the roof. He said they tried to put it out with fire extinguishers from the house. But the fire spread rapidly and the house's fire alarm system automatically called the fire department.

Henthorn said the Whaley group are declining to name the contractor that he said is "a reputable organization."

"It is not our wish to have their name soiled by a very unexpected accident," he said.

Now that all the artifacts have been removed, next steps will open walls and ceilings to dry everything out, White said.

The house was built (or remodeled -- accounts vary) in 1885 for the Robert J. and Mary McFarlan Whaley family, who lived there until Mary's death in 1925. At the time the three-story structure was built, it joined a row of ornate Victorian homes of prominent Flint families that lined Kearsley Street. All but the Whaley House were eventually demolished -- some to make way for the Cultural Center, others for the I-475 freeway.

Robert Whaley was president of Citizens Bank from 1881 until he died in 1922.

After several decades during which the house was a home for elderly women, in the mid-70s it was taken over by a consortium of seven community agencies that joined together to preserve it and make it available to the public as a museum.

Jan Worth-Nelson is the editor of East Village Magazine. She can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.



Photo by Edwin D. Custer

Whaley House burning Nov. 30

lost, along with a few pieces of furniture that were not from the Whaley family.

In the meantime, all December programs have been cancelled.

White said there is insurance to cover the estimated cost of \$1.2 million through both Whaley and the contractor.

He said that while the fire was limited to the southeast corner of the main house and much of the roof structure underneath the roof, water damage and soot damage is throughout the house, basement to attic, and everything in the house was either smoke or water damaged and has to be cleaned.

The cleanup and restoration team estimates it will take six to eight months for new wallpaper to be made. The Chicago

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George Liljeblad 1924-2015

The staff of *East Village Magazine* notes with sadness the passing of our longtime friend and colleague, George Liljeblad, who died in October at 91. We recognize and gratefully appreciate his many decades of faithful service to the community. A longtime resident of the College Cultural Neighborhood, Liljeblad served 35 years on the Board of Trustees for the Village Information Center, *East Village Magazine*. He was devoted to strong and vibrant neighborhoods.

A landscape architect and longtime director of Flint's Department of Parks and Recreation, he played a huge role in designing the city's open spaces we enjoy today.

ISIS: What it is – and what it isn't

By Paul Rozycki

Editor's Note: Columnist Paul Rozycki offered this "bonus" column as a local response in the wake of the Paris bombings. Since he wrote it, the San Bernardino, Calif., killing of 14 makes his points even more relevant.

After the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris a few weeks ago the reactions were, as you might expect, immediate and angry. The reactions were understandable, but like many fearful reactions, probably wrong.

Within hours, several presidential candidates advocated registering all Muslims, imposing a religious test for immigrants, closing mosques, bringing back torture, blocking the borders to all Syrians and bombing the **** out of something, or someone, somewhere. And, out of fear, public opinion has generally supported them. (Yet the NRA still isn't ready to stop terrorists from getting guns easily).

Take a deep breath, and get a grip, people. Let's remember what ISIS is, and what it isn't.

To be sure, ISIS, ISIL, (or Daesh as some are calling it) is a serious threat to the Middle East, Europe and the world. And those who kill the innocent, behead and burn prisoners, as ISIS has done, deserve the harshest of punishments. They

have grown from a minor force in the complex Syrian/Iraqi civil war to a significant power in the area, a terrorist threat beyond the Middle East, and a large psychological menace to the world. They have a military of some consequence and are willing to die for their apocalyptic vision of a Muslim caliphate. They are well skilled in social media and have had success in recruiting in western nations.

Yes, they are a serious threat and we need to defend ourselves and eliminate the threat.

But let's also realize what they are not.

They are not Nazi Germany.

They are not the Empire of Japan.

They are not the Soviet Union.

All three of those were major threats to the survival of the United States, western nations and their values. They all possessed formidable military forces and they all wanted to impose a very different set of ideologies on us. They all presented a dramatically greater menace to the US than ISIS. If any of them had prevailed, we would be a radically different nation, if we'd exist at all.

In the end, they were all defeated. It wasn't easy, quick or painless, but it was done. (Civil liberties were jeopardized in all those cases as well.)

And in spite of their name (Islamic State in Syria) ISIS is not a state in any

genuine sense of the word and they are not Islamic. While they control some territory in the midst of a civil war, no nation recognizes them. Nearly every Islamic scholar rejects them as thugs and murderers, bearing no relation to Muslim teachings.

Yes, we need to keep our cities and streets secure, and yes, ISIS may try, and may even succeed with some attacks, and we do need to take extra precautions to protect people, both at the border and within the nation. (But you still have a much greater chance of being killed or injured in a traffic accident than by any terrorist.)

But the fight against ISIS, and the fear of ISIS, shouldn't let us undermine the principles of a democratic society. A nation based on free speech, freedom of religion and open immigration doesn't need to abandon those values to take on ISIS. We should also remember that an overblown reaction against Muslims is the greatest recruiting tool for groups like ISIS.

We've beaten tougher opponents. And with a sensible mix of intelligent military, diplomatic and political tools we'll beat ISIS as well, without undermining our own principles.

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

... Family life

(Continued from Page 12.)

breathe the air. Sure, we worry about our bodies. We have too many bills. We have existential moments when this life seems too brief, when fear keep us awake at 4 a.m. But still.

I turned to Jackson, who was nibbling his syrup-drenched waffle. I asked, "What makes you happy?" He twiddled his fork and took another bite.

"I have no idea," the kid said cheerfully, entirely in the moment: the moment of the waffle. I swear he's a six-year-old Dalai Lama. I love this kid.

"Well, you know what makes me happy?" I said, turning back to my egg-white veggie omelet. "It's sitting here next to you."

It made him shy. But in a minute, he recovered. For the third time, he told his favorite joke. I knew what was coming, and I couldn't wait to hear his wonderful pealing laugh after the punchline. Here it is: What smells, is invisible, and is in a museum?

It's... "fartwork."

You're welcome.

Happy Holidays.

Jan Worth-Nelson is the editor of East Village Magazine. She can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

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Village Life

There's no avoiding family life this season

By Jan Worth-Nelson

The trouble with holidays, really, is families. The trouble with holidays is how society arm-wrestles us into facing who begat us. Sitting around various dining room tables, the menu rife with clichéd dishes and family histories – and so often histrionics – every year we play out, once again, what we're like when we're together.

Who doesn't dread it: the worn-out jokes, the one over-exuberant drunk, the prickly narratives of hurt feelings – when she did ... what was it again? – the predictable tiresome opinions, everybody taking exactly the same position they did last year, the ancestral cookie recipe that never quite turns out right, the hushed whispers about reversals and betrayals, and oh, yeah, that molded Jell-O salad loaded inexplicably with shaved carrots and cottage cheese. The way Uncle Boopie slurps his pumpkin soup.

I was at one family dinner where somebody choked on a hunk of turkey and threw up on his plate. And another one where somebody was so drunk by dinner he conked out at the table and his head fell into a pile of squash.

You know what I'm talking about

The vagaries, dear friends, of togetherness.

It's bad enough when you're a kid in your late teens, let's say, just back from college or other adventures away from the

Mother Ship: the overpowering effect of what it was you thought you got away from.

Then you come home and it's all still there: your embarrassing mother, the dowdy furniture, your father's aghast disappointment with your new politics, how nobody notices you've slimmed down and gotten a stylish new haircut. How you really are the middle child and that's your role – apparently until The Rapture – and your kid brother seems to be high on meth.

Just sayin'.

But it's even worse when you're the grownup in the room, and, looking around that table or that overheated living room, everybody sitting there nodding off on carbs, you realize you are face to face with your own culpabilities. Who are these people you call family? What did you do to make them like that? Is there any hope for any of them? How can you possibly apologize enough?

And what of your own half-forgotten dreams? Is it your fate when all is said and done to make that green-bean casserole every year from now on, hoping somebody, anybody, will say it was good? And is that all there is? What about your dreams of music, or that secret of sneaking off to New Orleans to see what it's like, or the itch that keeps coming up telling you to learn Tai Chi?

We'll all be doing well to get out of this with any psychic dignity.

On the other hand:

We love each other. We need each other. When the day is done, we forgive each other – one hopes. In our human loneliness and doubts, we are extravagantly, desperately in need of kindness, compassion, understanding and Lord Almighty, a few good laughs.

So this is a time to be grateful for that circle of loved ones we've gathered around ourselves to keep us warm through the winter. Whoever that is. Sometimes we aren't even "related." Our lives can accommodate many brothers and sisters, nurturers and those we nurture alike.

My own nuclear family, though my childhood years were replete with drama, has shrunk by now to just my brother and me, and we are two thousand miles apart. But I do have a family, a collection of dear and varied souls with whom I've shared good and bad with passionate engagement over the years. So I don't have to claim the aches of solitude unless I choose to go there.

We can make our own families

I'm so glad the boundaries of what makes a family have expanded over the years. The fact that gay marriage is legal

and marriages and remarriage – though complicated – can now re-arrange us into a Tetris of love – we're luckier now, if we have the sense to embrace them, to enjoy some reassuring counter-arguments against isolation and hatred.

A tale from the Olympic Grill

So, here is a story about my family – the one my real life created for me.

I was sitting in one of the big corner booths at Olympic Grill, savoring the relief of diner food the day after Thanksgiving.

When I'm in the corner booth, I feel important and fulfilled, because you can't just sit in the corner booth alone: I think there's a five-person minimum. I made the cut: I was with my husband, my stepson, my step-daughter-in-law and my step-grandson, Jackson. This is part of the family I've made, the circle of people with whom I share important history. There's not a blood relative among us, except that Jackson, who's six, is the biological son of his doting mom and dad.

Labels get so complicated these days. Eliot's my stepson but not Ted's, since he's the son of my first husband. I suppose we could call him Ted's stepson-in-law, etc., but that gets cumbersome. It's all a bit anxiety-provoking. What should we tell my step-grandson to call my second husband?

He has a grandpa already who's lustily involved in his life, his biological Grandpa Danny. Since that's my first husband and we're divorced, it feels disloyal to suggest that Ted would be called Jackson's grandpa. Then there's Grandpa Danny's wife, and then there's his maternal grandma, who showers him with love and gifts and yearns for more.

So Jackson calls him Mr. Ted. The sobriquet that suits me most is "Aunt," and I would be happy being Jackson's old aunt, but for now, he just calls me Jan.

Before going to the diner, Jackson and I had spent part of the morning sitting at the kitchen table talking about birds and things we might like to invent. I can't remember either of our ideas, but it doesn't matter now. It's so much fun when anything is possible. A woodpecker landed on the Bradford pear tree – a big red-headed one, and we were both thrilled to see it.

Happiness abounds

Anyway, in the corner booth at Olympic we all started talking about happiness. How much happiness can one expect to have? In the spirit of the season, we noted our incredible good fortune: we have shelter, we all found houses to buy that we could afford, we do work we like. We get to eat food every day. We can

(Continued on Page 11.)

December Elegy

By Grayce Scholt

The North is black with clouds today,
like waves, that when they crest somewhere
or here and crash, their crush of snow
will cloak the leaves
and grass and seeds
encrusting earth
with funeral white;
and we will grieve with winter's pain.

And yet we must believe that
April, May will come again
and bring their palettes bright with light,
that some celestial brush will wipe away
the deadly white, and paint the color
spring!

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.