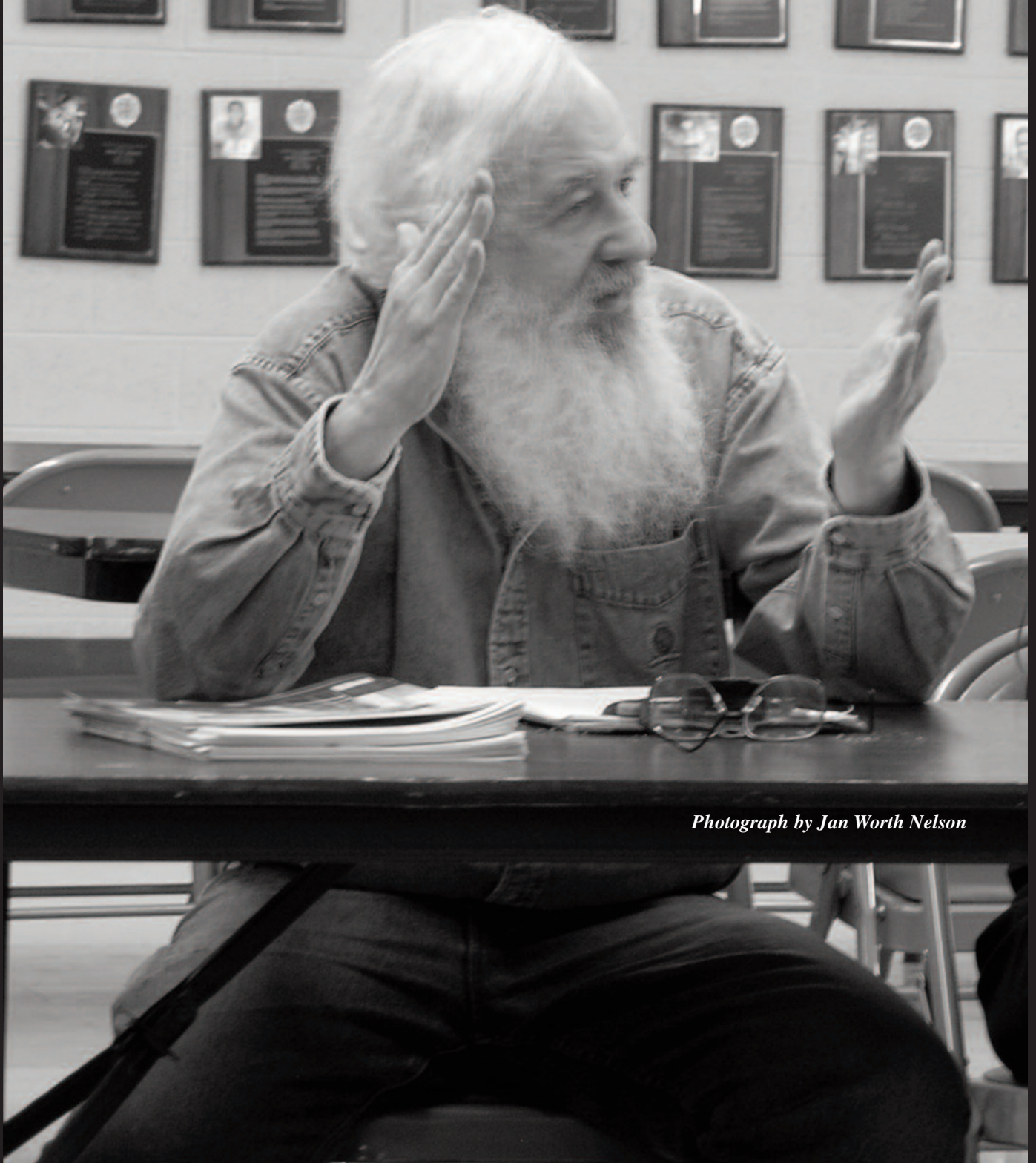


# East Village

Magazine



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# East Village

Magazine

Vol. LIII No. 1 February 2015

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# Editorial On loss and change

By Jan Worth-Nelson

There was a moment in the last sorrowful weeks of losing Gary Custer when we knew we had to move on. As we confronted what it was going to take to carry on without him, we discovered things that both intimidated and delighted us. Some of his methods, played out in that firetrap cave on Second Street, were as arcane and confounding as medieval alchemy. As a fuller picture emerged, I felt myself shift from mourning to loving what he loved. Together the EVM staff are figuring out what needs to stay the same and what might need to change—respectful changes that feel right and proper.

## The physical life of the magazine

For me, the shift out of mourning began when four of us marched into Riegle Press, the Davison company that has printed *East Village Magazine* for years. In the cavernous print shop, what assailed me most was the smell of ink. It's an intoxicating smell, pungent and a little sweet.

And the symbol is compelling, even in a digital age: ink as an essential oil of speech—what we call “free speech,” in all its exhilarating, earnest and embattled implications. Gary was devoted to this, as are the rest of his staff.

And then there's the paper: if you're reading a hard copy, touch what you're holding. It's a fine paper called Velvet White. The logo and body type are Times, a venerable font with those lovely little bumps and curls characterizing it as “serif.” The headline font Gary used was Futura, a “sans serif” font producing clean, unadorned lines. A photojournalism major in college, Gary had a definite aesthetic. He loved the clarity and crispness of black and white. The rest of us love it, too.

This is all to say, we have decided to continue the hard-copy life of EVM while maintaining the online site, [eastvillagemagazine.org](http://eastvillagemagazine.org), and beefing up our social media presence. We are shifting to more modern computers and software, but the look will stay the same.

## The journalism underpinning us

Gary loved hard local news. While his enterprise through the years drew the personal and subjective perspectives of “back

page” columnists like Teddy Robertson and me, Kara Kvasnicka before me, Mary Ellen Raleigh before her, the opinion pieces of Paul Rozycki and Jack Minore, and the poems of Grayce Scholt, his first love was always the news reporting that filled the inside pages. He never wanted the magazine to be all “features,” all “soft.” He distrusted the whole notion of “interesting ledes,” the first paragraph of a story. He wanted a factual, no-nonsense summary of what happened. Subject-verb-object, he told his reporters., subject-verb-object.

## The persona of the editor

I was perfectly happy in my retirement before all this happened. But, like Gary, I have a journalism degree and some of my happiest times in life involved a newsroom. Coming into this work has put a new spring in my step, and my husband's too. We're into it.

I will never be Gary. He was a noted curmudgeon; I, while certainly capable of righteous indignation, often ameliorate too soon. To say the least, he resisted change; I am a bit more pliable. In his later years, he was an extraordinary recluse; I must get out and mix it up in person. He liked to keep words simple, a classic “KISS” guy; I dangerously love the adverb and enjoy a vast vocabulary. He was deeply wrapped up in Flint; I have to be convinced of why some elements of local malarkey deserve our valuable ink.

This complicated city deserves good writing and excellent reporting. I love the audacity and sheer persistence of Gary's life work. And the current staff, as Gary himself recently noted, is one of the best in the magazine's history.

So, we continue his commitment to news about our neighborhoods. At least for now. Nothing, we all know, nothing lasts forever.

We are grateful to the C.S. Mott Foundation for its grant to support us. We are thankful to all who have offered donations and votes of confidence—especially since Gary died. To keep this adventure going, we will need your continued read-

*(Continued on Page 7.)*



*Photograph by Jan Worth-Nelson*

# Headline

*(Continued on Page 6.)*

## Opinion

# Hearts and Roses or Heartbreak and Thorns?

By Paul Rozycki

Usually the first column of the year is a time to look back at the last year and look forward to the next. With East Village Magazine's first issue of 2015 being published on Valentine's Day, maybe it's time to review the past year and the new year with a slightly different spin.

Valentine's Day is, of course, a day of love, hearts and roses. But love can have its dark side and the day can also be a time of heartbreak and thorns. What recent events deserve a Hearts and Roses Award? And what are the things that deserve a Heartbreak and Thorns trophy? (And which deserve a little bit of both?)

Several events deserve hearts and roses, either because they made our lives better in the past or they have the potential to do so in the future.

The vote on the new charter commission probably deserves a Hearts and Roses Award. Not because any particular change in the city charter will solve all of Flint's problems, but because the process begins to look to the future of a very different Flint--one that can be much better than it is now. Those who have chosen to run for the charter commission also deserve the award. It will be hard work for the next year or more, and the rewards may not always be apparent.

The second Hearts and Roses Award should go to the three new college leaders who have arrived in the Flint community in the last year---Susan Borrego, UM-Flint's new chancellor; Wendy Hemingway, Baker College's president;

and Beverly Walker-Griffea, Mott Community College's new president. The new vision of Flint will be formed by our institutions of higher education and these three new leaders can be expected to be major players in that effort. (Though he came to Flint a few years earlier, Kettering's President Robert McMahan is also deserving of the award, and has already done much for the city.)

Hearts and roses are also due to those who choose to run for office and take a leadership position during difficult times. This year Mayor Dayne Walling is facing reelection, and though it's not certain who his opponents will be, thanks are in order for all those who choose to tackle what is often a thankless and difficult job. The same is true for the newly appointed city council members, Kerry Nelson and Herbert Winfrey, who will also face the voters in November.

And certainly a Hearts and Roses Award is in order for the four retiring Michigan members of Congress who gave us 133 years of service---Senator Carl Levin, Congressmen John Dingell, Dave Camp and Mike Rogers. They deserve our thanks.

But Valentine's Day isn't always about hearts and flowers---sometimes it can be heartbreak and thorns.

Perhaps most deserving of the Heartbreak and Thorns Award is the state legislature's action, or inaction, on fixing the roads in Michigan. Instead of tackling the issue head on and making a decision to raise revenue,

they punted the ball to the voters in next May's election. In many ways the proposal isn't a bad idea, but a leader should make a decision and be willing to take the heat. The lawmakers (even those not facing reelection) passed the buck. The campaign for and against the roads bill will probably burn up \$20-40 million and still might fail, leaving the state and its roads with no fallback plan for 2015.

The lawmakers should also get a second award for their failure to update Michigan's civil rights act---the Elliott-Larsen Act, to include the LGBT community. It shouldn't have been a partisan issue. Most of the Republican business community supported it as did most Democrats. But when push came to shove, the lawmakers blinked and nothing happened.

It's probably all too easy to give the Heartbreak and Thorns Award to Flint's water problems. Just as we were slipping (slightly) off the national radar as the murder capital of the nation, now Flint is known as the place where you pay an arm and a leg for the water, but can't drink it (unless you check

*(Continued on Page 7.)*

## Headline

*Byline*

Body

## Headline

Body

*(Continued on Page 6.)*

*(Continued on Page 6.)*

# Capital

(Continued from Page 4.)

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Opinion  
Headline  
*Byline*

Body

(Continued on Page 7.)

## Whaley

(Continued from Page 5.)

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# Thorns

with your doctor first).

And some events are a little of both— hearts and heartbreak and roses and thorns. The next year may tell us which is more appropriate.

The Flint schools' decline seems to continue as deficits mount, schools close, furnaces break down, water pipes burst and students leave. Credit should be given to Isaiah Oliver and the school board as they wrestle with an avalanche of problems. But some days it must seem like they are trying to stop the tide with a teaspoon. Will the Flint schools avoid a state takeover in 2015?

The next step in Flint's long line of emergency managers may also be a bit of both. As Darnell Earley leaves and Jerry Ambrose takes over as emergency manager, the city should begin its transition to genuine self government. The long succession of emergency managers has certainly been a very thorny process. Ambrose will be the 12th emergency manager or mayor Flint has had in the last 13 years. Flint's new city administrator Natasha Henderson

also should be a key player as a transition team takes over in the spring. We'll see if Henderson, Ambrose and the transition advisory board produce any roses in the years to come for Flint.

Finally, the biggest heartbreak of all is the passing of Gary Custer—founding father and editor of the East Village Magazine for the last 38 years. Though many knew him better than I did, and longer that I did, his loss is felt by all who are part of the East Village Magazine and the Flint community. He will be greatly missed.

Paul Rozycki  
January 17, 2015

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# Wallings

*(Continued from Page 6.)*

# ...Change

*(Continued from Page 3.)*

ership, your views, and your help to identify the stories we need to tell. Thank you to all the volunteers who are hanging in with us. And thank you to all of you, our neighbors, for your patience as we pro-

# Blight, lightning

*(Continued from Page 5.)*

# Unclassified ads

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- **Four-bedroom** second-floor apartment on Crapo Street just off Kearsley Street. Recently remodeled featuring AC, new appliances, sunroom, smokeless fireplace, hardwood floors, pantry, laundry, garage with automatic door. Can be partially furnished. \$725 per month includes water. Pictures available.

- **Large furnished two-bedroom apartment** on East Second Street. Laundry and off-street parking. \$585 a month plus heat and electrical. Pictures available.

Jan Worth-Nelson  
Editor

# Village life

*(Continued from Page 8.)*

# Village life New Headline

Body

## *In The Vestibule*

*By Grayce Scholt*

In the crowded vestibule at church  
they tell me it's my mother laid out there  
stuffed inside a box on puffy satin  
ivory white that I should see:  
a mask with painted lips,  
rouged cheeks and Marcelled hair?  
A neighbor said, "She looks so natural,  
It's just as if..."

I look. But where?  
Why don't they know  
she is not there?  
She's standing at her spotless  
Detroit Jewel putting  
white potatoes in a pan and  
striking an Ohio Blue-Tip  
to make the burner glow.  
How can they know her meatloaf  
in the oven's waiting  
like the rest of us who know  
that when he comes from work at five  
we'll sit together at her table,  
say our thanks for this  
our food and fill our stomach,  
hearts with what she's  
done again, done again--  
mashed potatoes, meatloaf,  
tender beans she planted  
in the spring and gathered,  
rinsed away the garden dirt,  
and fed us  
life.

---

*I wrote this poem intending to send it to Gary for the January edition. But first, I would have asked him, as I often did, if he thought it was appropriate--too sentimental or too sad or too something. I knew he would have responded with a comment, usually positive, but always enlightening. So I don't know what he would have thought of this poem--originally intended as a tribute to my mother who died all too unappreciated when I was young.*

*But I'm hoping it may serve as one kind of tribute to Gary. For 38 years he fed this community, not with mashed potatoes and meatloaf, but with information, encouragement, and a genuine concern for the welfare of the entire city.*

*His indomitable spirit and his special kind of love will be sorely missed.*

*(Continued on Page 7.)*