

# East Village Magazine

December 2025



Photograph By  
*Ellen D. Carter*





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## Commentary

### Looking back at 2025: A year of change, conflict and challenge

By Paul Rozycki

**O**n the national political scene, 2025 has been a year of dramatic turmoil and change.

In the less than 12 months since President Donald Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration, the nation has faced challenges and changes that surpass many in recent history.

Unlike in his first term, Trump has surrounded himself with supporters who are largely unwilling to oppose him as he expands executive power beyond its normal limits.

Most of the Republican members of Congress have followed suit, as evidenced by their support of the recent federal shutdown – though a few are starting to speak out.

And while some federal district and appeals court judges have attempted to block Trump's actions, the U.S. Supreme Court seems willing to go along with several of them. For example, in the last week of its 2024-25 term, the Court granted the administration's request to continue deporting immigrants to nations other than their home country.

Overall, most of Trump's early agenda has faced vociferous opposition and support, and it may take years to sort out the full impact of all the actions his government has taken just this year. Here's a look back at some of them.

#### Pardons

On Inauguration Day, President Trump pardoned some 1,500 individuals who were part of the

January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol. Many other pardons of Trump allies and supporters have followed, including those charged with being "fake electors" in Michigan. By early December Trump had issued about 2,000 pardons or commutations, including convicted drug-trafficker and former President of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández; Changpeng Zhao, founder of cryptocurrency exchange that has connections to Trump family crypto ventures; and two turkeys, Gobble and Waddle, just before Thanksgiving.

#### DOGE

We have seen attempts to cut the size and spending of government as the now-defunct "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) dismissed tens of thousands of federal employees by June. DOGE's former leader, billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, symbolized the dramatic cuts by waving a chainsaw around at a conservative political conference earlier in the year. And while Trump recently ended the DOGE initiative eight months early, the nonpartisan Partnership for Public Service estimated that it cost the government \$135 billion rather than saving U.S. taxpayers any money.

#### Tariff wars

Much of the early part of 2025 was centered on Trump's "Tariff Wars," which greatly increased tariffs on goods from many nations. Over the year some of those tariffs were de-

(Continued on Page 6)

**Cover:** Applewood Estate's entrance, dressed for the holidays. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)





**Photo of the Month:** A winter view of Woodlawn Park. (Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

### **Education Beat**

## ***Board of Ed. confirms design, plans for Fall 2028 reopening of Flint Central High School***

***By Harold C. Ford***

Over the course of two recent meetings, the Flint Board of Education (FBOE), unanimously adopted a design and timeline toward reopening the long-abandoned and deteriorating Central-Whittier campus at 601 Court St. by the fall of 2028.

The votes happened across the Board's November 12 and December 3, 2025 meetings, before the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation subsequently announced its support for the project on Dec. 4 with \$5.3 million donation to the Community Foundation of Greater Flint "to support planning and development for a new Flint Community Schools [FCS] high school."

The Foundation had previously granted \$750,000 to FCS "to support community engagement and the first phase of design work," according to the same press release.

As East Village Magazine (EVM) reported earlier this month, the cost of building the renovated campus is likely to be north of \$134

million. Though a comprehensive budget has not yet been made public, it's clear that the Flint-based Mott Foundation will be a major contributor to the development.

"We're excited that FCS has crafted a vision for how to bring the former Flint Central campus back to life," announced Ridgway White, CEO, on the Foundation's website.

At a special meeting on Dec. 3, board members were effusive and virtually unanimous with their praise for the foundation's support.

"Mr. Parker, thank you sir," said FBOE Trustee Melody Relerford to Thomas Parker, Mott Foundation Executive in Residence, who was in the audience. "I support you."

Parker has been a frequent visitor at FBOE meetings since joining the Mott Foundation in 2021.

"Look at how far we have come," said a beaming Laura MacIntyre, FBOE Vice President. "I am really encouraged ... We are doing

remarkable."

### **"Tower" in, "Cube" out**

A schematic design of the proposed new campus "maintains a signature historical element" according to a presentation shared on Dec. 3 – the so-called "tower" of the current Central High building.

The design is a departure from an earlier-offered rendering in September, which included a "cube" structure, similar to that now seen at the Brownell-Holmes campus in northwest Flint. While that cube design was one of four possibilities presented to the FBOE for a vote on Dec. 3, it did not get the board's approval. The approved Central-Whittier design will also include the construction of new athletic fields.

While the design vote was ultimately unanimous, some discontent was evident in its aftermath.

When EVM followed up on

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## Central High...

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a social media post in which FBOE Treasurer Dylan Luna wrote he'd "strongly advocated for greater historic preservation and more robust public engagement," Luna said there had been another design scenario that would've preserved more of the current Central structure on the table.

"There was a bit more preservation [in the other design]," which he said the community had asked for in public comments and recent feedback sessions. He said the other design included the tower, too, but also more of Central's current façade.

"Ultimately though, this one had the consensus," Luna said of the chosen design. "At that moment, when I realized I didn't have the votes, I thought it was important to move forward, because this is a good thing for the kids, the community, and the entire City of Flint."

### Construction manager

The FBOE also approved a construction manager-agency (CM-A) method for delivering the Cen-

tral-Whittier rebuild project.

According to Nicole Blocker, a partner with Plante Moran Realpoint (PMR) who frequently advises the district about real estate matters, the CM-A approach is "commonly used in K-12 districts." She added that the CM-A construction delivery method is recommended by the school district's legal counsel, Thrun Law Firm P.C.

Blocker told the FBOE the construction manager's duties will include hiring, coordinating, and supervising subcontractors "that build on site." The CM-A also assists with the design phase including constructability reviews, scheduling and cost estimates ... "staying on track with scope, schedule and budget."

Blocker said that methodology, inherent in the CM-A approach, was also utilized during construction of The Cube at the Brownell-Holmes campus this past year. She also said the law does not require that the selection and retention of a CM-A be publicly bid out, as the work of a CM-A is deemed a "professional service."

### CM-A hire timeline

Scott Smith, PMR senior vice president, announced the timeline for hiring a CM-A for the Central renovation project at the Board's Nov. 12 meeting. Several steps in the project's timeline had been completed by EVM's print deadline.

From Nov. 13 through Dec. 1 a request for proposal (RFP) was issued by FCS describing the scope, schedule, budget, and any constraints of the project; a pre-bid meeting was held with interested bidders (candidates); proposals were submitted followed by a criteria-based review of proposals to shorten the list of bidders; and interviews of CM-A candidates began Dec. 4.

By Dec. 15 a recommendation letter is due from PMR "with hopes of having a construction manager on board by the end of the calendar year [2025]," Smith said. At its upcoming Dec. 17 meeting, the FBOE will consider the finalist recommended for the CM-A position.

"The construction manager is obviously a really big component of this process," added Smith.

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A draft rendering of the chosen design for Flint's new high school at 601 Crapo Street. (Image courtesy Flint Community Schools)



## **Commentary ...**

*(Continued from Page 3)*

laid or modified, but the tariffs – and the ongoing uncertainty around them – produced strong reactions from other nations and trading partners of the U.S. As reported by the Wall Street Journal, here in Michigan, tariffs resulted in major auto companies reporting significant revenue declines in the second quarter of the year. Both General Motors and Ford showed losses of about \$1 billion.

### **Government shutdown**

The past year saw the longest government shutdown in history: 43 days. During that time, the president dismissed a significant number of governmental employees, withheld Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and blocked the compilation and release of important reports on the economy.

The key issue between Democrats and Republicans was the extension of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) tax credits that went into effect during the pandemic, for which Democrats said they were holding out. A vote on the issue is scheduled for the near future.

### **DEI limits**

One major policy of the second Trump administration was to end or limit diversity, equity and inclusion policies (DEI) in many organizations, from colleges and universities to private companies. Many organizations complied while others resisted. The University of Michigan closed its DEI office in response to pressure from the administration early in the year.

### **Immigration**

Immigration was a major issue that Trump ran on and his second term. Since returning to office, he's mobilized Immigration

and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and local-level police forces to round up and deport illegal immigrants – though at least 170 American citizens have been swept up in these efforts according to an October ProPublica report. While the methods used to detain people have been sometimes successfully challenged in court, the number of detainees in ICE custody hit a record high of 66,000 in November – a 70% increase to the detainee population since Trump took office, according to reporting by CBS.

### **National Guard in cities**

Perhaps one of the most controversial of Trump's policies has been the use of the National Guard troops as a police force in urban areas of the U.S., often cities governed by Democratic mayors such as Memphis, Los Angeles, Portland and Washington D.C. There have been challenges in the courts that have blocked some of these actions, and state attorneys general in 22 states, including Michigan's Dana Nessel, have taken legal action to block the use of the National Guard in this manner.

### **Criminal charges against adversaries**

Other contentious actions include Trump's attempts to bring criminal charges against his adversaries. So far the courts have intervened to block some of those prosecutions, such as those aimed at former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James. But Trump more recently threatened six U.S. Senators, including Michigan's Elissa Slotkin, with treason charges for producing a video saying that those in the military do not have to follow illegal orders.

### **The Epstein files**

A continuing hot button issue

has been the attempt to force the release of the "Epstein Files" which might connect many high level individuals, including Trump, to Jeffery Epstein, a financier charged with sex trafficking but who died in jail in 2019. After much delay and debate, Congress did vote to release the files, and they are scheduled to be released within a month.

### **Wars**

On a positive note, the Trump administration played a key role in the current, if tenuous, ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. With some exceptions, the ceasefire seems to be holding, but there are still many details to work out for the future of Gaza and the Palestinian people. Trump is now making similar attempts to bring a conclusion to the war between Russia and Ukraine, but the prospect of peace seems elusive as a first proposal seemed to heavily favor the Russians and was widely criticized by the European Union.

Closer to home, the recent U.S. military buildup around Venezuela and the administration's attacks of alleged drug boats in the Caribbean raise the threat of future U.S.-involved conflict and allegations of war crimes.

### **Stock market record**

The stock market reached record high levels, fueled in large part by the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) investments. Yet some financial analysts fear that the AI "bubble" could burst, leading to a sharp decline in stock prices as happened with the "dot-com" bubble in the late 1990s. Others are concerned about the impact of AI on many white collar jobs that could be performed with artificial intelligence programs.

### **Continuing political violence**

2025 was also a year of much

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## Commentary ...

(Continued from Page 6)

political violence domestically, from the shooting of political activist Charlie Kirk to the attack on the Mormon Church in Grand Blanc and the shooting of National Guard troops ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday. Senator Slotkin also faced a bomb threat at her home in Holly following her comments that the military should resist illegal orders from the president.

### Positives on the local level

While national politics brought us much controversy in 2025, on the state and local levels, we've had some good news.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer worked with Trump on several beneficial projects, such as expanding the Selfridge Air National Guard Base, and the

split state legislature did produce a budget despite a divisive year for Republicans and Democrats nationally.

We also saw the Genesee County Board of Commissioners move to a new administration building in downtown Flint, consolidating 14 departments into a single location, and, following many deadlocked votes, Flint City Council found a working majority with the election of LaShawn Johnson (3rd Ward). Further, in May, eleven years after the Flint water crisis began, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lifted its emergency order requiring the city to treat its drinking water to control pipe corrosion, as reported in Michigan Public Radio, and payments to those harmed by the water crisis are moving closer to reality.

Though we've had some positives on the local level, federal

actions will continue to present challenges to all of us in 2026. My hope is that we will all be able to meet those challenges with optimism and a positive attitude in the new year and beyond. ●

## Unclassified Ad

### One-Bedroom Apartment for Lease

Spacious one-bedroom, East Village apartment on Avon St. near Kearsley St. Central air conditioning, hardwood floors, smokeless fireplace. Can be furnished. Private washer and dryer, off street fenced parking. In the center of it all on cul-de-sac Avon St. Walk or bike four blocks or less to UM-Flint and MCC campuses, Cultural Center, Public Library, downtown, Flint Farmers Market, Applewood estate horticultural gardens, four parks and easy freeway access. A great space for a responsible and mature tenant. **No pets.** References and credit check requested. On site management. \$795 a month plus utilities. E-mail: edevster@gmail.com or write: East Village Magazine, Apartment Box 11, 720 E. Second St., Flint MI 48503.

## Dear EVM Reader,

We all hope to leave a legacy, an impact that exists long after we make the investment.

Since its inception in 1976, East Village Magazine has kept residents informed and officials accountable. Our articles regularly feature local political commentators, artists, book and theatre reviews, and editorials as familiar as an old friend. EVM also serves as Flint's very own J-School, teaching journalism fundamentals to community members who want to help keep their neighbors informed on the issues that impact them most.

As one of the city's oldest nonprofit publications still in operation, EVM is driven by donations and the volunteers and reporters who see value in tackling hyper-local issues from a resident-focused lens.

### So, this giving season, EVM is asking for your support.

As a small nonprofit, our work has an outsized impact on the quality of life in Flint, and your contribution will help us continue to ensure every issue is made by your village: a group of writers, editors, distributors and donors investing in a nearly 50-year tradition of journalism training and local coverage.

**If you're able, please consider a contribution to EVM via the PayPal link on our website, [eastvillagemagazine.org](http://eastvillagemagazine.org), or by sending a check to Village Information Center, 720 E. Second St. Flint, MI 48503. You can also support us through volunteering to deliver issues of EVM to your neighbors or sharing this call to action with your social media network.**

Thank you for being a part of our village. We're so grateful to serve you.

*Sincerely, Your EVM Team*



# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

*Below is a selection of events available to our readers, beginning after our November publication date. To submit events for our January issue, email information about your event to [eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com](mailto:eastvillagemagazineflint@gmail.com) by December 31.*

## **Ugly Christmas Sweater Brunch Bingo**

Sunday, Dec. 14 | 12:30 - 2:30 pm

Join us for a festive and fun-filled Ugly Christmas Sweater Brunch Bingo at Timothy's Pub! Get ready to don your most outrageous holiday attire and enjoy a lively afternoon of bingo, delicious brunch food, and specialty drinks. Call ahead to reserve your spot: 810-239-0972.  
Timothy's Pub  
2890 Robert T Longway Blvd., Flint

## **Totem Open Mic Night**

Friday, Dec. 19 | 6 - 8 pm

Join area creatives every third Friday of the month for open mic night at Totem Books. Open mic is free and no registration is required if you'd like to perform. This month's open mic also coincides with Tim Jones' monthly musicians and creatives meet-up event, starting at the same time.  
Totem Books  
620 W. Court St., Flint

## **12 Days of Christmas Concert**

Friday, Dec. 19 | 7 pm

Join the Flint Scottish Pipe Band for a festive celebration where they will be spreading holiday cheer with a presentation of Highland Culture. Get ready to experience the magic of the season with music, dance and readings! Entrance is by donation, which benefit Hope Church and their continuing missions. Donations of diapers for their diaper drive are also appreciated!  
Hope United Methodist Church  
4467 Beecher Rd., Flint

## **Free Dog Wash Day**

Sunday, Dec. 21 | 10 am - 7 pm

Want to pamper your furry friend with a spa day they'll love – at no cost? Join the Magoo's team for our upcoming FREE Dog Wash Day! Let's make this event a tail-wagging success! They can't wait to see you and your beloved pups there.  
Magoo's Pet Outlet  
4190 E. Court St. (Suite 703), Burton

## **Brunch with Santa**

Sunday, Dec. 21 | 9 am - 12 pm

Kick off Christmas week by visiting with Santa and Mrs. Claus! Take photos, see if you're on the "Nice" list, and enjoy a delicious brunch. Devyn Mitchell will be providing soft, live holiday tunes in the dining room, and the best part - kids eat FREE! Brunch starts at 9 am, the Clauses arrive at 10 am, and the music starts at 11 am.  
Irene's Craft Kitchen and Biergarten  
210 Reid Rd., Grand Blanc

## **Christmas at Crossroads**

Step into a winter wonderland at Crossroads Village, where holiday magic fills the air and history comes alive for an unforgettable experience. Enjoy a charming evening ride on the historic 1800s Huckleberry Railroad, or stroll the streets adorned with classic decorations that capture the spirit of Christmas past. Don't forget to stop by and say hello to Santa! Christmas at Crossroads kicked off on Nov. 28 and runs through Dec. 28.  
Crossroads Village  
6140 Bray Rd., Flint

## **KKandles Candle Making Experience**

Saturday, Dec. 27 | 2 - 4 pm

We're closing out the year with creativity, intention, and good energy. Come make your own 10 oz candle, craft a mini wax melt, decorate your vessel, sip wine, snack, laugh, unwind... and enjoy the ultimate self-care afternoon. Tickets are \$60 and include your candle, wax melt, vessel, wine/juice, and charcuterie bites. More info at: [shorturl.at/97whC](http://shorturl.at/97whC)  
Queens' Provisions  
421 Garland St., Flint

## **Flint Firebirds vs. Saginaw Spirit**

Friday, Jan. 9 | 7 pm

Come see Flint's OHL hockey team take on rival Saginaw Spirit in the new year! Single game tickets range from \$15 - \$29, and can be found at [chl.ca/ohl-firebirds/single-game-tickets](http://chl.ca/ohl-firebirds/single-game-tickets).  
Dort Financial Center  
3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint

## **Winter Drop Fest**

Saturday, Jan. 17 | 2 - 11 pm

Drop Fest organizers will be partnering up with downtown businesses, restaurants and bars to bring you a day of live musical performances by DJs and producers from across the Midwest, live art, vendors and more for all ages.  
Buckham Alley  
121 W. Second St., Flint





## Central High...

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Early on, the FBOE is to receive an initial contract that includes details of preconstruction services: fencing to secure the site; temporary toilets, roads, and construction office; related staffing; and fee percentages as applied to the cost of the work.

Amendments to the plan are possible after the demolition-abatement phase and after the construction phase begins in 2026.

### More open or more private?

With the process for selection of a construction manager settled, it remained for the seven FBOE members to determine if the hiring of all remaining contractors and subcontractors would be undertaken with “open bids” or in a “more private” manner.

FCS Superintendent Kevelin Jones explained the two choices to secure those who would do the

bulk of the work in transforming the Central-Whittier campus. The first was “open bids” available to anyone in the public, a more time-consuming and more transparent process. The second option would utilize RFPs, a “more private” process that would include input from the CM-A.

“We can do it either way,” said Jones.

“I’m not comfortable with someone else having that process decision,” said Trustee Relerford, moving to adopt the “open bids” approach.

“I think that’s what the public wants,” added MacIntyre. “It’s good democracy.”

The board then voted unanimously, 7-0, to adopt the “open bids” process for hiring contractors and subcontractors for the Central-Whittier rebuild project.

### “Long time coming”

The upgraded campus is projected to open to students in the fall

of 2028, according to early design scenario documents obtained by East Village Magazine.


“This has been a long time coming,” said Terae King, the board’s assistant secretary-treasurer.

The campus was shuttered by the district in 2009. Since its closure, there have been many starts and subsequent stops for reimagining and reoccupying the campus as reported by this magazine.

In March 2017, for example, then-FCS Superintendent Bilal Tawaab told EVM that 2020 was the target date for the opening of a new, consolidated high school at the Flint Central High School campus.


This magazine, as it has done in the past, will report on developments as they arise. The next FBOE meeting is scheduled for Dec. 17 at 6:30 pm. According to current scheduling, the meeting will take place at “The Cube” on the district’s Brownell-Holmes campus. ●

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Flint Symphony Orchestra

## American Frontiers

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**FIM** Flint Symphony  
Orchestra



## Poetry

### The Rock

By Nic Custer

Who did it first is lost to legend  
or at least to me  
but it's become a rite of passage.  
A place to mourn friends  
too often swallowed up without warning,  
leaving questions grieving can never answer,  
leaving only a name and half-remembered laughter  
lacquered with layers of paint to hide the pain.

For a Flintstone, The Rock is hallowed ground,  
a wildflower always blooming.  
A catalog of love and loss  
where hard hearts weep in aerosol,  
where they carve magic inscriptions  
turning windshields into gravestones.  
A sunlit stalagmite showing you the way out  
after you've stumbled down those  
darkest caves within your chest.  
This blameless brick box we named Pandora's,  
Caked with color and restless spirits  
Baring mute witness to living la vida local.  
A man-made monolith agating over  
wilted bouquets and billboard-sized birthday cards.  
A relic from a community created  
in a hurry, for jobs that today feel like myths,  
to residents unified by a history of heartache.  
If archaeologists could dissect  
the stratigraphy of our downfall,  
they'd split that roadside geode  
and unearth the soul of this city-  
separate each fragile message  
like dead sea scrolls waiting to be read, peel back layers  
to tell a tragic story backwards-  
uprooted family trees and  
broken branches.

A bucket of paint,  
hands clasped in prayer  
(around a spray can.)

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## Village Life...

(Continued from Page 12)

as a fifth grader. But on occasion the old man would get comic books with characters I recognized, like Batman or Spider Man.

It was at that small store that my love for comics and superheroes began, reading about the Dark Knight's dedication to Gotham City no matter how bad it got, or "your friendly neighborhood Spider Man" with his quick wit and love for his community, or "the Man of Steel" and his super-strength ability to lift a car with one hand.

Slowly, I was inspired to be like my heroes in those comics I perused on my way home.

I didn't have a Batmobile, but I did have an orange sash that gave me the power to help others. Sure, I couldn't hold a vehicle over my head like Superman, but I could hold up an entire line of cars with just one hand while I waved the younger kids across the road.

In those pages, though I didn't know it at the time, I fed my fledgling desire to serve others and my community. In those pages, I learned that it's easy to do the right thing when it's fun or convenient, but true service doesn't begin until you feel the sacrifice. And out in the contemporaneous real world, my mom, Mr. Kimber, and that kind old man (who seemed to live in that small novelty shop) took care to help me write my own story of service.

When I got to middle school my desire to help continued, and I joined the student council. Then in high school I joined the JROTC program. After graduating I chose to enlist in the Marine Corps to serve my country. Now, as a veteran and a current AmeriCorps VISTA member, I remain so grateful to the heroes that surrounded me in elementary school, both on and off the pages of my favorite comics. Without realizing it, they encouraged me in a pattern of serving and being a part of something greater than myself – starting with a bright orange sash in fifth grade. ●



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East Village  
Magazine

## Village Life

### ***Thanks to my heroes***

*By Daniel Vela*

**A**s a child attending Neithercut Elementary, I wanted nothing more than to don the bright orange sash and shiny silver badge worn by student crossing guards. But such an important responsibility was reserved solely for the privileged few: the ever so mature and wise fifth graders.

Sadly, as a mere fourth grader, I was foiled by the hands of time and my own youthful incompetence. However, I was determined that the next school year I would ask what I had to do to become a student crossing guard.

The teacher overseeing the program was Mr. Kimber, a favorite of many students. He was known for hurling Jolly Rancher candies out of his car window when driving by groups of us, like some type of one-man parade, and incorporating music into his teachings. (Allow me a quick aside here: I knew Mr. Kimber was cool, though I didn't know just how cool until years later when I learned that he had played in bands with musicians like Elton John and Stevie Wonder, lived in Australia for a decade, and that he even helped create the jingle to a popular PSA for Woodsy Owl to teach children "To give a hoot, don't pollute." What a guy!)

When I asked Mr. Kimber what I had to do to become a crossing guard now that I was a fifth grader, he informed me that I just needed to get to school thirty minutes before the other students arrived and stay thirty minutes after school, when the last bus left.

This likely seemed a simple ask, but I knew it would be a challenge for me considering my family didn't have a car and I took the bus to and from school each day.

So, imagine my surprise when I told my mother, Norma Jean, this unfortunate requisite, and she said that, if

I wanted to, I could stay after school and walk the mile and a half home after the last bus had left. I was thrilled, but it was also a bittersweet feeling because my normal bus ride home felt like it took forever some days, and I wasn't sure how long it would take me to walk instead (or what direction to even go).

But I was determined to be a student crossing guard, and with some sacrifice, a loose sense of direction, and a few neighborhood landmarks in mind – a right after Rosehaven Manor, a left after Ace Hardware – I figured I could make it.



After checking with Mr. Kimber, he assured me that it would be okay for me to be an after-school-only crossing guard, and he told me to report to my assigned post at the corner of Greenbrook and Crestbrook Lane five minutes before school let out. So I finally, excitedly, donned my orange sash and shiny badge, prepared to be of redundant service at the clearly marked four-way stop.

I soon learned my new accessories held little authority over the younger students who were so excited to be out of school – reminding me exactly why this role was reserved for the likes of strong, mature fifth graders like myself.

Still, I took my mission seriously, ensuring the stopped vehicles remained stopped, and once every student had crossed the road and the last bus pulled away, I started my journey home.

I did this walk every day that school year, rain or shine or snow. I took Crestbrook Lane to Hammerberg Road, Hammerberg Road to Fenton Road – all the way down to the Grand Funk Railroad overpass – to my street, Lexington Avenue, where we were the last house on the left of a dead-end.

While it was only a mile and a half, at age 10, it seemed like the longest walk known to man, and I would often make stops to help break it up. There was a church I would step into to warm up in the wintertime as well as an inconspicuous little store between Pettibone and Lincoln Avenue with an old man behind the counter.

That store stands out in my mind to this day. It often had a bunch of what seemed such random items – candy or novelty joke toys like fake gum that would snap your finger when you took it out, whoopie cushions, and hand buzzers – scattered sporadically on a glass shelf, as if the owner had just found them and decided to put them up for sale. His inventory was very limited, but to 10-year-old me, it was like my own Tiffany's on Fifth Avenue.

The old man at the counter, I unfortunately don't recall his name, would often sit and watch TV while I browsed the quirky selection. Sometimes he would even have hot chocolate, and he'd offer me a small styrofoam cup for the rest of my journey home.

I also remember there was a spinning rack with old pulp fiction, murder-mystery, western, and Archie comics, which weren't really my taste

*(Continued on Page 11)*

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