

Grins & Groans

THE ISSUE | Grins and groans from events last week.

OUR OPINION | Grins to the Campbell-Savona school vote and a helping hand by the PeaceWeavers. Groans to the partial sinking of the Keuka Maid and problems at Dresser-Rand.

Grin

Campbell-Savona school vote.

Some \$7.9 million worth of improvements will be made at Campbell-Savona schools as residents there overwhelmingly approved a spending plan. And why not? The entire cost will be paid for by the state.

Still, it's always good when the community decides to support school investment. Half of the funds approved last week will be used for safety measures and the rest will be spent on fixing roofs, upgrading computer labs and classrooms and buying instructional equipment.

That should help make C-S an even better school district than it already is.

Groan

The Keuka Maid sinks. It spelled disaster for the Kavulich wedding party who were in full celebration mode when the dinner boat began taking on water last week.

Luckily, the boat was docked and only partially submerged. No injuries were reported.

But the unfortunate event puts into question the future of the once popular cruise boat. Since spring it has not been allowed to cruise Keuka Lake and has been restricted to its dock at the head of the lake. New federal regulations require the three-deck vessel be pulled from the water for inspection but so far its sheer size has prevented that.

As a result, the boat's business dropped this season and now its owners have to deal with water damage and repair costs. It's a sad situation for something that has been an area attraction for many years.

Grin

A helping hand. Residents from New Orleans' Seventh Ward were treated to a week of rest and relaxation at Thunder

Mountain in Bath, a retreat run by a group called the PeaceWeavers.

Most of the visitors still are dealing with the hardships of the devastation created two years ago by Hurricane Katrina. The Seventh and Ninth wards were in the direct path of the storm and were hardest hit by the flooding that resulted when the levees broke.

The PeaceWeavers, along with many other groups in the area, have not forgotten the hurricane victims. Though it seems long ago, many in New Orleans still have no permanent place to live, are without jobs and many conveniences we take for granted. But volunteer groups, like the PeaceWeavers, remain dedicated to assisting those people by helping rebuild their neighborhoods, sending supplies and offering a variety of support.

Groan

Problems at Dresser-Rand.

We're not taking sides here, but work stoppages are almost never good. More than 400 members of Local 313 are on strike, unhappy with what the company offered in a new contract.

Specifically, they didn't like that their insurance costs would rise and that the union would relinquish some power to the company. They claim it's unfair because the company is making millions in profits and has over \$1 billion worth of backlogged orders.

The Painted Post plant is operating with about 400 non-union workers and temporary workers brought in. So the work goes on, but D-R announced last week it was pulling plans for a \$3.5 million expansion at the facility that would have created 50 new jobs.

Talks are scheduled to resume Wednesday and it's our hope an accord can be reached that will be fair to both sides.

ARTIST'S VIEW



Massa the choice for congressman

Although we won't elect a congressman for another year, at least the situation has already become much simpler.

The decision last week of Democrat David Nachbar of Rochester to abandon his

THE INSIDER



Bob Rolfe

quest for the seat now held by Republican Randy Kuhl of Hammondspont leaves the field clearly defined for all to see.

It's simply Kuhl versus Corning Democrat Eric Massa.

Massa ran in 2006 and lost by a mere three percentage points. Kuhl was put back in office solely because of the strong support he recorded in the primarily rural areas of Steuben County.

Randy traded on his "good ole boy" image and as the guy who managed to plunder the federal treasury more successfully than some elected officials who did not serve so abjectly as lackeys to George Bush.

Kuhl seldom mentioned the war and his undying support for the president on the campaign trail, while Massa spoke frequently on the subject. The retired Navy officer has a clear vision for a post-American Iraq — one that is shared by many others who've studied the situation.

Iraq has three major religious-ethnic groups, he has said, and each should be given control of their own area of the country.

There is a need for a central government, but a weak one not modeled on the American system.

Massa appears not to share Bush's messianic drive to remake the Middle East as a U.S. clone.

That's why this individual voted for him the last time, and will again in 2008. I like his position on Iraq, his belief that Bush's war of conquest is wrong, and he seems to understand the needs of our somewhat unique congressional district.

Besides a Democratic primary could have destroyed either Massa's or Nachbar's chances of defeating a Republican with carefully entrenched support.

Now the choice is much easier.

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I've never been a fan of those who troll for work with TV commercials, but like everybody else, I've been unable to avoid them.

To me, though, the most obnoxious — and most frequently repeated — were for a firm in Rochester with a stern-faced front man.

I'm not about to give them free ad space here, so just say that the spokesman spent months trumpeting the successes of "the Smith firm." His outfit had collected gazillions of dollars for clients and seemed unstoppable.

Then without warning, Smith developed a partner. It became "the Jones and Smith firm" and no one ever explained where Jones came from.

Indeed the image of Jones in the new ads looked suspiciously like they had been added to the original commercial. I have no idea what this turnaround is all about, but I must admit it's raised my curiosity.

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COMMENTARY | LEONARD PITTS JR.

All I have to say



You wanted to read my Michael Vick column? Sorry, that's not going to happen.

Let me be clear: If Vick sponsored dog fights and brutally killed canines who did not perform as he is alleged to have done, he's a despicable man. It wouldn't break my heart to see him caged up with a rabid dog while wearing raw sirloin strapped to his tender parts.

Problem is, that's pretty much all I have to say on the subject and there's no way to get 615 words — about the length of a column — out of that. Actually, I hadn't planned to comment at all on the NFL star's indictment last month. That's not to say it's not an important story or that the allegations aren't sickening. Still, it's not, so far, a topic to which I think I could bring any particular insight.

So I'm not here to talk about Vick but, rather, about why certain of my readers so dearly "want" me to talk about him. I get these e-mails, you see. Anybody who's been a black columnist longer than 15 minutes knows the kind I'm talking about. They arrive reliably as the tides anytime some black gets in trouble. Inevitably, some Caucasian gentlemen will dare you to lay into this individual the way you "always" do white guys.

I'm not talking about the polite requests ("What's your take on this?"), but about the sneering demands. The "reasoning" seems to be that black malefactors get a pass from

black pundits who'll tear a white guy a creative new orifice when he misbehaves. So the black pundit must prove himself to the white guy by tearing some black embarrassment to humanity a hole exactly equal in size and shape. That reasoning is long on smugness, long on entitlement, long on everything except, you know, fact.

Frankly, I doubt Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, Whitney Houston, Tim Hardaway, Isaiah Washington, New Orleans DA Eddie Jordan, Ray Nagin, the NAACP, Ice Cube, 50 Cent, Ludacris, the family of Martin Luther King Jr. and other black folk who have been ripped and ridiculed in this space would agree that I give black folks a free ride. But again, we're not talking about facts here. For that matter, we're not talking about me, nor even about journalism.

No, what we're talking about is that some white people — emphasize: "some" — seem to feel they have a perfect right to demand, overtly and repeatedly, that a black professional prove himself to them. We're talking about the realization, as a black professional, that for them, you will forever be on probation, your mastery of your profession, your right to be there, constantly subject to demands for verification.

We're talking about the black lawyer second-guessed by the client who never spent a day in law school. About the black money manager whose

clients won't accept her advice until it is seconded by her white partner. About the black cardiologist whose diagnoses are rejected by patients unwilling to accept them from a doctor of her gender and race.

And yes, I know some people would argue that this is only to be expected, that the very existence of affirmative action entitles white people to question the competence of black ones. That's a copout. I've said it before, I'll say it again: if affirmative action is defined as giving preferential treatment on the basis of gender or race, then no one in this country has received more than white men.

Still, though the rationalization is lame, it serves a purpose: it deflects us from thinking too hard how it must feel to learn that, even after years of education and apprenticeship, after the hard slog of working your way up and waiting your turn, some people will still find it problematic to accept you as a professional. Will still raise a hoop and regard you with an expectant stare.

They think I should prove myself to them by trashing Michael Vick? No.

I could not prove half as much in honoring that request as they prove in making it.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't accept 'slipshod' work

TO THE EDITOR | Subsequent to the tragic bridge collapse on Aug. 1 in Minnesota, the media has run rampant with reports that have stated the necessity for bridge inspections throughout our country. If we value the quality of work performed by our highway workers, I invite the public to view the tar crack sealing job on State Route 53, between Steuben County routes 8 and 13 in the Township of Wheeler.

If the slipshod sealing work was performed by a

NYSDOT employee, I surely hope that the same employee is not the person inspecting bridges to determine if they are safe for the public to cross on a daily basis.

We should expect nothing but the best from anyone serving the public.

Paul Meese
Bath

Mayor should lead by example

TO THE EDITOR | What's going on with the mayor now? Mayor Coccho seems

to find one controversy after another. Now the mayor is being charged with using inappropriate words to a female union employee during arbitration. How is any business of the city getting done?

The mayor's conduct should be a shining example to all. When Mayor Coccho ran for mayor his pledge to the people was to keep personal politics out of city government. Can we get through the week without another flurry of charges?

Joseph Kilmer
Corning

NATIONAL VIEW | DALLAS MORNING NEWS

FCC stops short

Imagine owning a car that will run on only one brand of gasoline.

You wouldn't. But that's essentially what cellphone owners do when they sign on for service.

If you have an iPhone, then you have AT&T's wireless service and no other choice. Want a jazzy new feature that your friend has on his phone? The only way to get it now is to pay your way out of a long-term contract, sign another contract with a new carrier and buy a pricey new phone.

The Federal Communications Commission last week took a step toward ending this craziness but missed an opportunity to accelerate consumer-friendly changes. Consumer benefits now could come slower than they should.

Specifically, the FCC set the new terms for auctioning part of the nation's airwaves called spectrum. The spectrum for sale is highly prized and capable of more effectively transmitting voice, video and other media through walls and other obstacles.

Some portions will become part of a national emergency communications network while other parts will be sold to commercial firms, like Google, who have an interest

in competing with wireless carriers.

The good news for consumers is that the FCC will require wireless carriers to open their networks to more easily accommodate various devices and software applications. The disappointing news is that regulators stopped short of completely opening every cellphone Internet network to all competitors a condition Google had sought.

The spectrum is so valuable that there's likely to be no shortage of bidders, even if the playing field isn't completely level. Nonetheless, the FCC's cautiousness makes competition more problematic, which, in turn, makes innovation and consumer convenience also problematic.

In many other nations, customers can change carriers without changing cellphones and use cellphones on Wi-Fi networks to access the Internet. Decades ago, competition ended rented black rotary phones and ushered in cordless phones with voice mail, caller ID and other features. More recently, cellphone users have been allowed to change carriers without also changing telephone numbers.

The FCC's role is to promote competition in the public interest, and that task is not yet complete.