

UNAPPROVED CHESTERFIELD NEWSLETTER 19

December 27, 2012

By John Hoffmann

I'M GETTING SO OLD: My favorite area signer, Dean Christopher, has a nightclub style Christmas show he used to perform regularly at the now shuttered Finale Nightclub in Clayton and on cruise ships. Dean is one of the best impressionists I have ever seen or heard, including Rich Little.



During his Christmas time act he would always do his salute to Turner Classic Movies and the one Christmas song he hates the most, The 12 Days of Christmas. In a recent guest appearance with the Route 66 Jazz Orchestra Dean reluctantly agreed to do the bit. The youngest persons in the room were a couple of the musicians. The youngest audience members were probably around 40.

In Dean's 12 Days of Christmas, each day is done in an old movie or TV star's voice. I heard this routine seven times and laugh every time I hear it again. But this year I was also troubled when Dean did at Sky Music on Kehrs Mill Road. Here is why:

First Day: **John Wayne**...everyone recognizes the Duke.

Second Day: A spot on **Walter Brennan**...you start hearing people ask, "Who is that?"

Third Day: It is Samantha's Uncle and the center square...**Paul Lynde!** You hear, "I

know the voice but I can't remember who it is."

Fourth Day: **Boris Karloff** arrives and in between laughs, I hear, "I don't know this one."

Fifth Day: It's **Kirk Douglas** and before talking about five gold rings he gives a speech from Spartacus. There are a few confused looks.

Sixth Day: **James Cagney** says hello hitching up his pants for six geese-a-laying.

Cagney went from 1961 to 1981 without appearing in a movie. (One-Two-Three in 1961...Ragtime in 1981. He died in 1986). There were a couple of, "Huhs?"

Seventh Day: It's Bogie. I think almost everyone knows **Humphrey Bogart** except two of the youngest band members

Eighth Day: "I just got finished with a line from my picture...see. I said, "Where's your Moses now?" Okay **Edward G. Robinson's** last movie was in 1973 (Soylent Green), but ABC has been re-running the Ten Commandments every Easter for decades, so I was dismayed when a woman asked her husband, "Who is that?"

Ninth Day: **Jerry Lewis** comes on stage and for some reason everyone still knows Jerry.

Tenth Day: Henry Fonda arrives from the Golden Pond. Someone looked confused at a table next to me. I say, "It is Jane Fonda's father." (Jane just turned 75!)

Eleventh Day: I don't give a damn...I recognized the voice right away and laughed...at **Clark Gable**

Twelfth Day: **Jimmy Stewart** is talking to Clarence. Thank God everyone got this one.



And a partridge in a Pear Tree.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING AT THE SUPERMARKET:

Frosty The Snowman: My shopping trip on Saturday night December 22 included a stop at the Schnucks at Clayton and Woods Mill Roads and then it was on to the super sized 75,000 square foot Dierbergs on Manchester in Des Peres.

At Schnucks the stop is only for some Baby Swiss cheese at the Deli and to say hello to Mr. Morton Mendelson, who works at the Deli. Morton has been working in St. Louis delis and downtown restaurants for 40 years. He and his wife live in eastern Chesterfield and I run into them regularly at jazz clubs and other music events. He is always a lot of fun and even though Felix spelled his name Mendelsshon, Morton is always ready to fire back a joke at you when you address him as Mr. Beethoven or Mr. Brahms.

Morton and I chit-chatted, I got my cheese and head to the checkout. As I walked up to the checkout the store's music system was Frosty the Snowman song sung by Jimmy Durante. At the register were two young men, a 20-year checker and a maybe 18-year-old bagger. I asked them if they knew who was singing Frosty the Snowman right now.



LIFE They both said they didn't. So next I asked, "Have you ever heard of Jimmy Durnate?"

"No!" they answered in unison.

Gene Autry first recorded Frosty in 1950 as a follow up to his biggest hit ever, Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer. Durnate is associated with the song from the 1969 TV special where he sang the song.

The Customer No Longer Comes First: A few minutes later I'm at the deli counter of Dierbergs and asked for a half-pound of the spiral honey ham. The sign at the Deli claims it is a "Dierberg's signature item. Scott at the Deli tells me they are out, but he will check in the back.



Travis then comes out from the back and says they have run out but they have exactly the same thing in a case on the floor that was packaged at Dierbergs from the hams cooked at Dierbergs. The difference is the packages have several pounds of ham.

Travis got a package from the case floor display case and brought it back to the deli. He said he'd see if he could open the package and sell me a half-pound of their "Signature Ham."

He then talked to someone else and came back and said he can't open the package and fill my order.

"You mean to tell me that the customer no longer comes first. Despite the fact you are selling more of your "Signature Ham" at the Deli than from the case you can't take a the same product from a display case and move it into the deli where you can sell it to a customer?"

"I know it sounds crazy, but they won't let me do that," said Travis.

It was like Dierbergs was very nicely giving me the finger and saying "we really don't want or need your business."

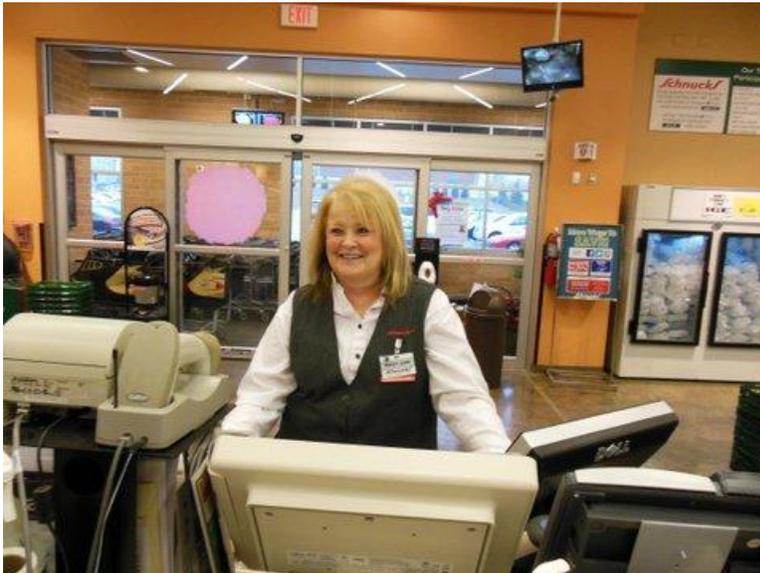
On the way out I stopped an assistant manager and stole some lines from Oscar Hammerstein and told him that I was slightly discontented like a nightingale without a song to sing and explained how I could not buy their signature product. The manager said they should have checked with a manager and they would have gotten permission to open the package.

I stopped him and said in the old days stores always wanted to put the customer first and preached how the customer was always right, even when they were sometimes wrong. I said, I see times have changed. But I added that I write columns about politics and happenings in West County and thanked him for 350 words.

WITH THE NEW YEAR WE SAY GOODBYE TO OUR FAVORITE GROCERY

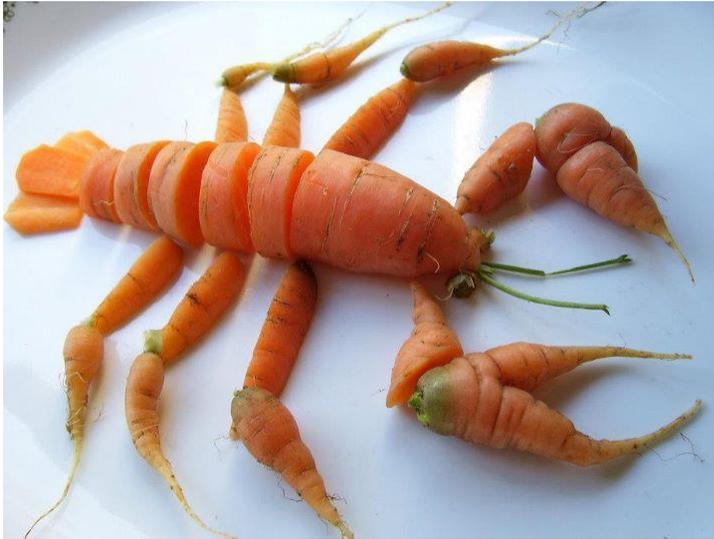
CHECKER: When my wife and I lived in Kansas City, MO (North) we regularly shopped at Bob's IGA in Gladstone. We had our favorites in both the Deli and the checkout line. We tried to shop on evenings when Nancy worked in the deli because she was so darn nice. We would share photos of our dogs and vacations. We also would wait in longer lines to be checked out by Caroline, for the same reason.

The 16 years we lived in suburban Washington, DC we never experienced that again. When we moved back to St. Louis we found ourselves shopping at the Schnucks in Des Peres and Mary Ann Libbert was the cashier whose line we would wait in even if other lanes had no waiting. Mary Ann's smile and friendliness was always worth the wait. With the New Year we won't be seeing Mary Ann any more. She retires on January 13. I hope she enjoys life with no longer having to search for a barcode on a case of soft drinks, but we will miss her.



Mary Ann Libbert and her smile retire from Schnucks in Des Peres on January 13.

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS HOLIDAY DINNER:



THE SHERIFF OF MIRTH: I am sure you have read or seen TV news coverage on the recent death of long time St. Clair County Sheriff Merle Justus. Back in the late 1980s I had attended a couple of law enforcement convention and seminar banquet dinners in Western Missouri and in Kansas where Justus was the main speaker.

He did a 40-minute comedy routine. People who did not know Justus often thought he was a professional comedian who used the name of Sheriff Justus as part of his act.



Justus would arrive in a tuxedo. Even in his fifties, he looked to be in his late 60s. He appeared to be in the mold of actor Wilfred Brimley. His delivery was very dry. He was not afraid to use political jokes, but had a catalogue of time tested material.

“The problem with small police departments is the constant turnover and always having younger officers. I know one small town police chief who had to ban the officers from McDonalds...too many injuries on the playground equipment,” deadpanned Justus during one speech.

“Sheriff Justus? You mean Sheriff Rodney Dangerfield,” one ATF agent told me after a Justus appearance at a banquet in Topeka, Kansas.

I spent a day with Justus in researching an article I was writing on him for a national public safety trade magazine.

The day started off at his office next to the St. Clair County Jail. Two signs on the wall got my attention and told volumes about Justus. One said, “This isn’t Burger King. We don’t do it your way. This is a county jail and you do it our way.

The other was an award about a guy who had a good time with people. It said:

American Dairy Association of Illinois
Ice Cream Eating Contest
July 15, 1986
First Place

A DWI ARREST YOU MAY HAVE MISSED: The newsman many of us loved to hate was arrested for DWI. 78-year-old Sam Donaldson almost kept his December 1 DWI arrest in Lewes, Delaware out of the press...but it made to the papers on December 19. Donaldson was best known for a bad toupee and for asking or shouting questions toward chief executives during the Carter and Reagan administrations, when he was the Chief White House Reporter for ABC.

GANS BACK IN THE FIRE DISTRICT RACE: Former fire district director Rick Gans filed as a candidate to try and unseat Monarch Fire Protection District President Kim Evans. This is a three-way race. Besides Gans and Evans, Russ Lake has also filed. Lake has been on the fire district's citizen advisory board.

In 2011 Gans lost his seat to Steven Swyers 4,330 to 3,830. Gans has continued an interest in the fire district and has been a critic of the current board. While on the three person board of directors, Gans and Robin Harris formed a majority that some considered more pro taxpayers and less pro-firefighters union. With the election of Swyers the Board seemed to take a swing back to the pro-Union side.

An audit of the fire district released in 2012 by the Missouri Auditor's Office reported the district held an excessive amount of closed meetings, many which may have been in violation of Missouri law. They still hold almost half of their meetings in secrecy. The report also criticized the district for holding a party for employees that cost \$25,000. The vote for the appropriations for the party was held in a closed "secret" meeting with the Board claiming it was a personnel matter.

The audit also reported problems with billing from a lobbyist of the legislature during the term of the current board and lawyer fees from the board that Gans sat on.

On December 26 I called the Monarch to see if anyone else had filed prior to posting this newsletter. I staffer who answered the phone at headquarters would not answer my question. Instead she transferred the call to Tom Vineyard to say no one else has filed. Apparently public information such as this can only be given out by the highest official.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

JANUARY: Chesterfield Goes Low Tech...Adds a Shuffleboard Court: The City Council approved \$8,065 to build two shuffleboard courts in Eberwein Park after the

Parks Committee received a request for the courts from two residents. It is a good thing they didn't ask for a Polo Field. Wikipedia reports shuffleboard is popular on cruise ships and at retirement homes. The problem is the city supplies only the courts. You



have to provide you own stick (known as a tang) and disc (called a biscuit) if you plan to shot the biscuit down the court.

Dooley Threatened to Close Clarkson Road Government Center: Besides threatening to close a large number of parks, County Executive Charlie Dooley threatened to close the West County Government Center on Clarkson Road. We think that this had little to do with revenue flow but more of a message to West County residents that Dooley has not forgotten how they voted against him in the last election.

Squirrels and the Second Amendment: former City Councilman Gene Schenberg



believes it is his right as an American to shoot at squirrels with a .22 rifle or a .177 pellet gun. Schenberg believed the Second Amendment covered not only invading British troops but furry rodents also. The City Council thought otherwise and passed an ordinance making it illegal to shoot weapons in the city limits after Schenberg's neighbors complained about him discharging guns.

FEBRUARY: 200 Years Later Another New Madrid Earthquake Would Damage Area: On February 7, 1802 the third and most violent of the three great New Madrid Earthquakes hit, estimated to be a 7.7 on the earthquake scale. A MoDOT engineer said most roadways are now engineered to handle earthquakes in 6 to 6.9 range, but a 7.7 quake would likely flatten all highway overpasses. City Public Works director Mike Geisel likes to think that with newer construction Chesterfield would have less damage than other parts of the area.

State Auditor Rips Monarch Fire District: Missouri Auditor Thomas Schweich released an extensive audit of the Monarch Fire Protection District. The audit found the District held 40 meetings which should have been open to the public, but instead were closed. The fire District still prefers to hold mostly closed meetings.

Schweich also reported a lobbyist hired by the district was paid without submitting billing of hourly work. The best thing that Schweich found was how the Fire Board closed a meeting from the public to vote to hold a \$26,000 for an employees' party. The reason they claimed for the closed meeting was to discuss personnel matters.

Chesterfield Residents Being Overcharged for Fire Dispatching: On February 7 we reported that Chesterfield residents were paying \$63.37 too much each time a fire call was dispatched. Instead of paying for the actual costs to dispatch fire and EMS calls, Chesterfield residents are taxes on assessed valuation. Actually they are double tax, since they are playing a 9-1-1 sales tax and being hit with a 5-cent per \$100 assessed property tax for Fire Dispatching.

MARCH: Challenger for City Council never bother to vote in city elections: David Arbogast was running against incumbent Barry Flachsbart for the Ward-1 Council seat. Flachsbart has held the seat since Chesterfield began a city in 1988. Interestingly Arbogast never bothered to register to vote until 2007 and had never voted in a city election. We guessed Arbogast was a New School candidate where voting was not a big deal, while Flachsbart was more Old School since he had voted in every city election ever held in Chesterfield.

APRIL: City Council votes to go with the high bidder: Despite being the highest bid and the competing bidders having good reputations the City Council decided to spend \$53,363 over the low bid for pool services. The city council didn't even go with the second lowest bidder, but with the highest bidder of three companies. The idea of going with a low bidder was not very important to any councilperson. The contract went to the highest bidder on a 7-to-0 vote.

Charter Cable Discriminates Against Elderly: On April 21 charter Communications took away the favorite channel of people over 65 from expanded basic cable and moved it to the digital package. The channel is Turner Classic Movies. Kid oriented MTV and VH1 and Comedy Central remained on the basic package because charter could "drop-in" commercials sold by Charter ad salespersons. However TCM has no commercial breaks so Charter can't make any extra money off the channel. To show their most

loyal customers who are the least likely to change service to a competitor, Charter moved their favorite channel to a higher costing service level.

MAY: Parkway Gives Trips to Florida after Announcing \$9.6 million in Cuts. The Parkway School decided they would send seven employees to Orlando for a conference in June costing \$11,000. This comes after they announced they would have to make \$9.6 million in cuts for the next school year. You would think they could have cut another \$11,000 pretty easily.

Developer Threatens City and City Council Members Lecture Residents All in Public Hearing: The Public Hearing on May 7 was about approving a Community Improvement District (also known as a Commercial Improvement District) 1-cent sales tax for the Premium Outlet Mall being proposed on the south side of I-64 at the Missouri River. The tax would allow \$30-million in sales tax to go to the developer to offset the costs of building and maintaining the mall.

Steve Dworkin of Premium Outlet malls flew in from New Jersey and said if the CID tax was not passed they might not build the mall.

Dworkin told the Council the outlet mall would attract four million shoppers a year. Councilman Randy Logan then told the crown of angry residents opposed to the tax, how the average shopper spends \$200 per visit to an outlet mall and that would only be \$2 in new sales taxes per visit. Wait a minute! My math says $\$2 \times 4,000,000$ a year equals \$8,000,000 a year. \$30,000,000 would in raised in less than four years, not the 20 years the Council eventually approved.

Residents and even a former mayor voiced opposition to the new sales tax that would raise sales taxes at the outlet mall to 9.3%. Then Councilmen Matt Segal, Randy Logan and Derek Grier all began to lecture the crowd like they were village idiots.

Taubman Outlets Files Suit in Circuit Court for a TDD: At the same time Premium Outlets was battling and winning a CID sales tax, the City of Chesterfield had no opposition to a suit filed in Circuit Court by the completing outlet mall developer, Taubman, for a Transportation Development District Sales Tax of 5/8 of 1-percent. However city Officials tried to keep the TDD request a secret and would not discuss it, claiming it was a pending legal matter even though the City of Chesterfield was not being sued for any damages.

JUNE: City Leaders Upset with Coverage From Patch.com. City Administrator Mike Herring arranged meetings with the mayor, councilpersons and Patch.com regional editor Kurt Greenbaum to complain about the intense coverage of city politics by local editor Jean Whitney. Jean's coverage appeared to be even handed but contained featured articles three and four times a week. For the rest of the press city officials were use to it was a couple stories a month.

Grading Politicians by Their Cars Column Finds Mark in Chesterfield: I wrote a combination humor/political column where I gave a Political Correctness Grade to area politicians based on the type of cars they owned. From senate candidates all the way down to members of the city council received grades. Only Chesterfield city councilpersons received D and F grades for overpriced foreign cars, which all scored low on the American Political Correctness Scale.

This resulted in more complaints to Regional Editor Greenbaum, who vowed the local editor would no longer control my column but he would have to approve it also. This cause me to quit, but it was a hallow gesture. Starting in July AOL and Patch.com was dropping all freelance writers and columnists due to a lack of revenue.

PATCH FIRES FREELANCERS AOL Patch.com launched in St. Louis late in 2010. The hired freelance photographers, feature writers, opinion columnists, food writers, sports editors and sports writers. Within four months they began to drop freelancers due to a lack of ad sales. The photographers were the first to go. Within 14 months the sports writers and editors were gone. Work assignments shrank. I was making \$500 a month in November of 2010 and was down to \$200 a month 18 months later. The cost of one of my opinion columns dropped from \$50 to \$20. Patch.com lost \$100,000,000 in 2011 and cost parent company AOL from showing a profit in 2011. The New York Times predicted patch.com would be out of business sometime around the beginning of 2013. Currently local editors are the only writers. In some cases local editors are now running two Patch sites to further reduce expenses.

Chesterfield Newsletter is launched: On June 21 we launched the UNAPPROVED CHESTERFIELD NEWSLETTER. The title pokes fun at Patch.com's Kurt Greenbaum as a business manager who demanded control of opinion columns from the local editor. The newsletters both report local news and provide my opinion, which is based on 34 years of working in city, county and State governments, plus a dozen years as a working journalist.

Party Buster Ordinance: A bill for an ordinance to charge property owners for rowdy teenage parties where underage drinking or drug use is found was introduced and eventually passed several months later.

Rockwood Superintendant Doesn't Get It: Bruce Borchers apparently didn't understand that the voters were sending him a message when they voted down a bond issue in April. That message was "stop wasting money and hiring your friends to unnecessary jobs." Borchers responded by giving \$45,000 to a consultant to find out what the community's concerns are with the school district.

JULY: Architectural Review Board forced new restaurant to repaint. What's worse an empty former Dairy Queen or an open tax producing KimCheese Deli on Olive Blvd. near Woods Mill Road. Apparently for the city's Architectural Review Board it was the yellow and blue paint job on the roof. They made the owners repaint before they could open. Oddly the yellow and blue color scheme had been okay for two former Blockbuster Video stores located in Chesterfield for a number of years. A month earlier the Red Lobster in Chesterfield Valley had to get ARB permission to repaint their front door.

City leaders are they tax and spend Democrats or West County Republicans? City officials announced they will be spending \$250,000 in 2013 to celebrate the city's 25th anniversary. That comes out to \$10,000 a year. It is a good thing it was not the 100 year anniversary because that would cost the city residents \$1,000,000.

Ballwin City Administrator Snitches out Chesterfield City Administrator for Accepting \$250 World Series Ticket from a city contractor. City policy strictly forbids employees to accept gifts over the value of \$25 from companies doing business with the city. The Ballwin city administrator Bob Kuntz got caught by a city alderman for accepting a \$250 ticket to Game 7 of the 2011 World Series from the city's contracted trash hauler, Allied Waste. Kuntz in his defense said all the guys were doing it and named Mike Herring, city administrator of Chesterfield as also being a guest of Allied Waste. Allied just received a non-bid contract extension from Chesterfield.

Herring refused to respond to our request for information about the gift.

Hospitals upset about Orthopedic Surgeon's New Facility: Cardinals team orthopedic surgeon, George Paletta, wanted to open a new surgery center at I-64 and Boone's Crossing where patients could stay for up to three days after surgery. Opponents representing area hospitals complained Paletta was in essence opening a

hospital, but was able to cherry pick only patients who could pay, while area hospitals had to treat all comers and specialty surgery groups helped underwrite emergency rooms and patients with no means to pay for treatment. The city later gave permission for the surgery center, saying it was up to the State of Missouri to issue a license for them to open.

AUGUST: Councilman has a temper tantrum when fellow councilman fixes his bill: Randy Logan acted like a three-year-old when he asked senior Councilman Barry Flachsbart what his problem was with a bill Logan introduced on a building site issue. Flachsbart explained it was flawed and the city attorney then backed up Flachsbart.

Judge Gives Chesterfield Man Probation for Killing Chesterfield Mother in DWI Accident: St. Louis County Judge Thomas Prebil gave 55-year-old Patrick McCormick probation after he killed Chesterfield resident, local high school teacher and mother Janet Esrock on August 11, 2011. The accident also severely injured Esrock's teenage son. McCormick was drunk while driving home and crossed the center line hit Esrock's car head on.

Legitimate Rape Enters Politics: Congressman Todd Akin saw his slight lead over Senator Claire McCaskill disappear after he could not keep his mouth shut and agreed to an interview on the little watched Jaco Report. Long time watchers of Akin knew he regularly said stupid things...the question after his primary election victory was when and how stupid. It turned out within two weeks he pegged the needle on the "Stupid Meter."

NO More Editorial Cartoons: Layoffs at the Post-Dispatch means no more daily local editorial cartoons. The paper laid off R.J. Matson. This is the same paper whose cartoonists used to win Pulitzer Prizes.

SEPTEMBER: Campaign Finance Records Show only folks in Chesterfield and Ladue Gave More Money to Akin: According to Federal Election Commission campaign contribution records only people from the Chesterfield and Ladue zip codes contributed more money to Todd Akin than to Senator Claire McCaskill. These campaign contributions were before the "legitimate rape" comments made by Akin. Couples Mitchell and Jody Waldman and Kathy and Thomas Maneniti each gave Akin \$10,000. I hope they have better luck picking stocks.

OCTOBER: State Rep. Collected More than \$341,782 to Run Against No One. State Rep. John Diehl so far in 2012 had raised \$341,782 in his 2012 reelection

campaign. Diehl, the house floor majority leader has never had any opposition. He did use some of the money to pay off \$50,000 in credit card bills. While running against no one in Chesterfield and Town and Country Diehl also counted trips to Branson, Kansas City and New Jersey as campaign expenses.

After “Legitimate rape Interview McCaskill Collects More from New York City than Akin does from all of Missouri: The Missouri U.S. Senate race became a national race after Todd Akin’s ill advised interview with Charles Jaco. After the interview Akin’s opponent, Missouri Senator Claire McCaskill received more campaign contributions from New York City (\$221,950) than Akin did from the entire State of Missouri (\$216,859).

Romney calls me a “Most Notable American Republican: Presidential candidate Mitt Romney sent me a letter stated that I was one of America’s most notable Republicans and then asked for \$50,000.

NOVEMBER: Mayor and Councilman Worry About Pit Bulls in Dog Park. Mayor Bruce Geiger and Councilman Elliott Grissom both expressed concern about the city dropping the dangerous dog designation of pit bulls and allowing pit bulls in the city’s dog park. The changed later passed.

People Still Driving from Kentucky and North Carolina to Load up on Missouri Cigarettes: Missouri voters did not pass a cigarette tax increase, leaving Missouri with the lowest cigarette tax in the United States.

McNary Loses after Promise to Shutdown Lobbyist Gifts: Chesterfield State Rep. Cole McNary promised in ads for his state auditor campaign to end lobbyist gifts. In 2011 McNary accepted \$2,012 in lobbyist gifts for meals and golf outings.

Diehl Goes Over the Million Mark: With his November campaign finance report State Rep John Diehl went over the million dollar mark in funds raised since 2008 to run in races where he face NO opposition. Expense in the latest report showed a \$1,175 dinner bill at café Napoli in Clayton.

Chesterfield to Spend \$50,000 for a Tourism Bureau. The 2013 Chesterfield city budget has \$50,000 set aside to establish a tourism bureau, apparently for the hicks that will be coming from the sticks to shop at the outlet malls.

DECEMBER City Adds Two Police Officers Three Years After Laying Off Six: In December the 2013 Chesterfield budget showed the city planned to add two new police officers. In 2010 the city eliminated six police officers positions.

PM B-B-Q Moves: The very popular P.M. B-B-Q moved into a larger building at the opposite end of the shopping center on Long Road at Edison.

CHESTERFIELD PRECINCTS MOST CONSERVATIVE IN COUNTY: Our research showed that two precincts in the Chesterfield Township (2 & 8) that vote at the Monarch Firehouse #5 posted the highest percentage of votes for Mitt Romney and Todd Akin in St. Louis County.

Beauty Queen Only Candidate in Ward 1 Race: On the first day of filing for April's Municipal Election only Adelaida Peterson, a contestant in the Mrs. International Beauty Contest in 2013, filed.

In One Month Another \$51,897 For Diehl: State Rep. John Diehl's final campaign finance report of the year (covering November 2012) showed another \$51,897 raised from mostly out of special interest groups in his 2012 campaign against no one. Since 2008 Diehl has run unopposed in every election and has raised \$1,078,000 in cash. In the last month he claimed over \$1,900 in meals at Café Napoli in Clayton in one day, a hotel stay in Clayton and three more out of town trips, plus three different airline flights.

CARTOONS:





A cartoonist's inside joke





"You didn't know? There's regular Santa, and there's Underwear Santa, and if you are bad, all you get is underwear for Christmas."



