

## EX ALDERMAN NEWSLETTER 192 AND CHESTERFIELD 137



By John Hoffmann

September 7, 2015

**\$2.3 MILLION FOR WIRTH PROPERTY IS NOW PROJECTED TOWARD \$5 MILLION BOONDOGGLE** When Mayor/Cigarette Lobbyist/User of Eminent Domain to Snatch a Business and Property from a 78-year-old Widow Jon Dalton announced the pending purchase of the Wirth property in October of 2014 he claimed it was a bargain and a great thing for the city.



Dalton



The woman he cheated and her lawyer



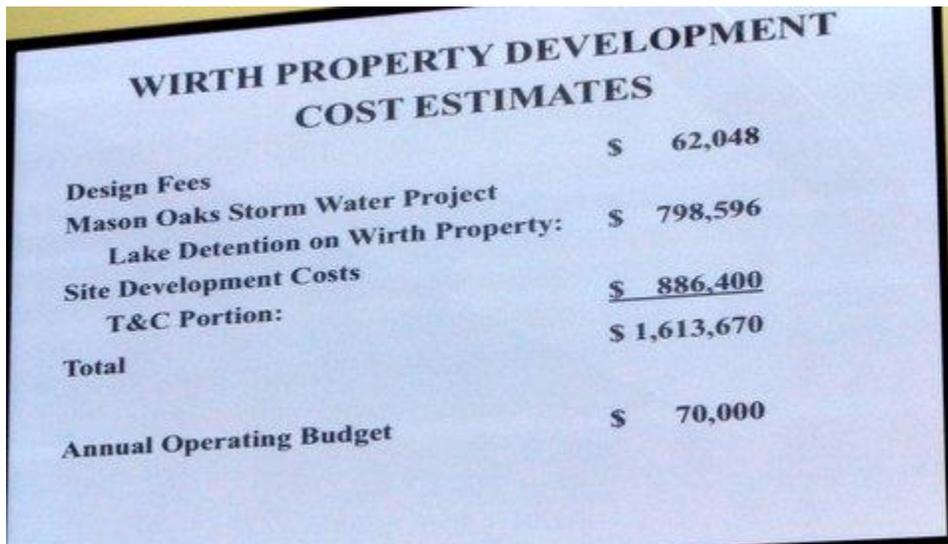
The Saint he sued

The proposed purchase price was \$2.3 million and if the property did not appraise for more money the sale was off. An appraisal for the eight-acres of land with 1.8 acres being commercial was over \$3 million. However the Wirth family had been unable to sell the property for 10 years making it worthless for 10 years. In 2013 rezoning for a proposed assisted living facility was voted down by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

At the time of the purchase which the Board of Aldermen approved on an 8-0 vote, it was inferred that the property would be sold off only to the right developer with neighborhood friendly plans. There was no mention of turning it into a park and in fact at one time it was said, it would not be a park.

Since that time Dalton has created two "Town Square Task Forces" and suddenly the proposed use for the land is mostly as a park and water retention lake to reduce storm water from impacting a neighborhood.

At a recent Board of Alderman workshop meeting the city staff provided the following information:



WIRTH PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COST ESTIMATES	
Design Fees	\$ 62,048
Mason Oaks Storm Water Project Lake Detention on Wirth Property:	\$ 798,596
Site Development Costs	<u>\$ 886,400</u>
T&C Portion:	\$ 1,613,670
Total	
Annual Operating Budget	\$ 70,000

The annual maintenance costs of \$70,000 plus inflation, plus unknown repair issues pushed that number closer to \$1,000,000 over a 10-year period. So let's look at the bargain that Dalton brought in 2014 that the city was originally going to recover its costs, by selling the whole thing to a developer.

\$2,300,000 Original purchase price  
\$1,613,670 Total site development costs  
\$1,000,000 Site maintenance and repairs over 10 years

**\$4,913,670**

That is quite a bargain for a city with deficit budgets for the last two years and projected deficit budgets for four of the next five years.

Of course since day-one many of us suspected that Dalton wants to tie the Wirth property in with a future purchase of 17-to-30 acres of land across the street from the Principia School along Clayton Road and Mason Roads. Alderman Skip Mange included this projected use in a slide presentation to the Mason Oaks subdivision and then deleted it in other presentations and tried to deny it existed at Town Square meetings.

But it has been clear that Dandy Dalton wants to move the city hall across the street from the Wirth Property and create a "town square." Dalton who moved into town by buying a foreclosed house and then was sued by contractors for not paying his bills, is ready to reduce the city's cash reserves more and more.

**DISSENSION OVER WIRTH PROPERTY:** Back in November of 2014 Jon Dalton had everyone's vote on buying the Wirth property for the bargain basement price of \$2.3 million. In fairness readers must remember that Tiffany Frautschi was not yet elected to the Board of Aldermen.

The 2014 deficit budget already had \$20,000 for Wirth property projects, so Skip Mange did not need to ask the BOA for permission to spend \$2,500 per each of four design firms to come up with ideas on what to do with the Wirth Property. The city code requires legislative approval for each item in excess of \$7,500. But Skip put it on the agenda. At the August 10 meeting the BOA President Jon Benigas, sitting in for Mayor Jon Dalton wanted a discussion before approving the matter. He had at least three votes, with Linda Rallo and Frautschi joining him. Nobody knew how Gussie Crawford was going to vote. Without the Belle of Beaver Isle Amy Anderson present (still living at her summer home in Michigan for two months) Benigas might have had the votes he needed. Mange caved and agreed to the continuance for a "Discussion."

On August 24, Dalton was back at the head of the table. The Discussion started at 5:45 and Mange and Anderson repeated everything they had already told the board for 35 minutes. Heads were beginning to nod off. But things were about to change.



Boredom sets in as

Skip Mange and Amy Anderson wrap up their repetitive talk about Wirth Property committees..

When Mange was done and everyone was able to shake themselves awake there were 10 minutes left for what some considered "questions" and what Dalton felt was a "discussion."

"What about traffic," asked Linda Rallo.

"We will have to hire a traffic engineer. Right now that is not being considered," replied Mange.

**Bengias starts attack** "I feel it is unfortunate to have just 10 minute to discuss this," Benigas said.

"Do we know what the revenue will be for the commercial space," asked Benigas of Mange.

Mange didn't like the question. He started getting red and paused before saying, "NO." He then added, "You are not going to get your money back," he said referring to the \$2.3 million used to buy the property.

Dalton not liking the direction Benigas was going piped up, "This will be the center of the community for years to come,"

Just like back in 2008 Dalton said exactly the same thing before he poured \$1.5 million into remodeling the Longview Farm House without doing a study of who would use it. Dalton claimed rental of the house by private groups would create revenue. The house has not even produced enough revenue to pay the person's salary who was hired to handle rentals. How far away is the Longview Park from the Wirth Property? It's about 3,000 feet away.

**"When I voted on this it was said (by Dalton) it would not be a park. We are clearly creating a new park,"** said Benigas.

**New battleground** "We are sending out a RFP (request for proposals) that tells designers to ignore the city code," said Benigas in response to an earlier comment by Manage that there was no need to follow the city code on parking requirements.

"I personally disagree with the recommendations made by the Task Force," said Benigas.

By now both Benigas and Dalton were red in the face as the exchange escalated.



**Reinforcements** Benigas wasn't alone with his displeasure on how the Wirth Property talks were going.

"I feel the job of the committee (Task Force) is over," said Ald. Linda Rallo in response to Skip Mange's earlier statement that the Task force would later review the designs submitted and make a recommendation to the BOA.

"We are sending the wrong message that we are going to do something that we can't afford," said Rallo who has also asked where future funding to maintain the property was going to come from.



Linda Rallo



Wirth Property

Rallo was restating what she had said two weeks earlier, which was the alderpersons were putting the cart before the horse by paying for plans before it was decided there was enough money to pay for it all.

Tiffany Frautschi then jumped in and said how she agreed with Benigas and Rallo and added that she had a lot more questions.



Dalton said they could have further discussions later when plans were submitted.

Lynn Wright, who for the last couple of years often looks like she is sedated, spoke up. Lynn is for anything that involve Parks or anything that Dalton supports.

"What if we passed up Longview Park? What if you passed up Drace Park," said Wright. Those questions actually sent a message that there are already two city parks along Clayton Road and the 500 acre Queeny County Park just south of Clayton Road.



Lynn Wright

In the regular Board of Aldermen meeting the expenditures passed on a 5-3 vote. However smoke from Wirth property dissension was beginning to rise.

**SERIOUS CRASH ON HWY 141 AT CLAYTON ROAD:** On Wednesday September 2 a three vehicle crash shut down northbound Highway 141 at Clayton Road. A large truck overturned after demolishing a pickup truck, which was forced into another car. MoDot was doing construction work in the area that slowed traffic and the truck driver's view reportedly was blocked by a vehicle in front of the truck, which suddenly changed lanes. The truck hit the pickup truck at a considerable speed. Everyone was injured and two of the drivers were transported to hospitals for treatment and one declined treatment. No citations were issued.



**BRILLIANT SUGGESTION AT WARD-2 FORUM** Now let's see what it takes to get anything done. Perhaps the best thing said at the one-hour long Ward 2 Forum with Alderwoman Tiffany Frautschi in August was a suggestion by one of the nine attendees, a woman who lives in Mason Valley. She wanted to know why there isn't a sign prohibiting bicyclists on the narrow, winding section of Mason Road south of Clayton Road.



State law won't let you ban bike riders from any road other than a limited access highway or Interstate Highway. Mason is a County controlled road so good luck there.

However her statement had some merit.

Why not put up signs along Clayton Road, a city owned and maintained street where there are numerous bicyclists in skin tight spandex outfits pedaling in large groups. Those signs could be in International "Warning Yellow" and would say

**Danger!**  
**Bicycling on**  
**Mason Rd**  
**S of Clayton Rd**  
**HAZARDOUS**





**DON'T RAIN ON MY PARADE:** On Monday night August 24 after leaving the Town and Country Board of Aldermen meeting I went to have dinner and enjoy a Rat Pack Monday performance at the One-19-North in Kirkwood. Who happened to arrive 30 minutes after I did and is sitting right next to me? It is NFL Hall of Fame tight end and former Football Cardinal Jackie Smith. For two weeks I had been told that it was confirmed that Jackie was in the first annual Town and Country Parade.



During a break in the entertainment I had the following conversation with Jackie:

ME: I hear you are going to be in the first ever Town and Country Parade.

JS: What are you talking about?

ME: Red Schoendienst is the Grand Marshall and for two weeks they have been saying that you and Bob Rowe are confirmed being the the parade.

JS: It would be nice if someone had asked me. Here look. (He pulled out his I-Phone and pulled up the calendar page.) What day did you say it was?

ME: Saturday October 3 at 3pm.

JS: Look at my calendar. Do you see anything written in for October 3? (The calendar box was blank for October 3.)

On August 31 Jackie had finally actually been contacted and confirmed for the parade.

Here are some other people who reportedly will be in the parade.

**GRAND MARSHAL:** Red Scheondienst

**Members of Baseball or Football Hall of Fame:** Lou Brock, Whitey Herzog and Jackie Smith

**RETIRED BASEBALL PLAYERS:** Ken Dayley, John Costello, Andy Benes, Alan Benes

**RETIRED FOOTBALL PLAYERS:** Bob Rowe, Irv Goode, Jim Otis, Mark Arneson, Ron Yankowski

**Golfer & St. Louis Sports Hall of Fame:** Dick Shapier

**Soccer Player Olympic and FIFA USA World Cup Teams:** Lori Chalupny

**Media:** Jennings "Jay" Randolph, McGraw Milhaven

**U.S. CO-NATIONAL SPELLING BEE CHAMPION:** Gokul Venkatachalam

**MUSIC:** Whack-a-Doo, plus a Jim Manley Brass group, the Principia High School Jazz Band all in truck beds or on a trailer. No marching band as of yet.

**Shriner Cars** The number of Shriner miniature cars has dropped and it may only be a few of the yellow jeeps. They are already committed to three other parades on Oct. 3.

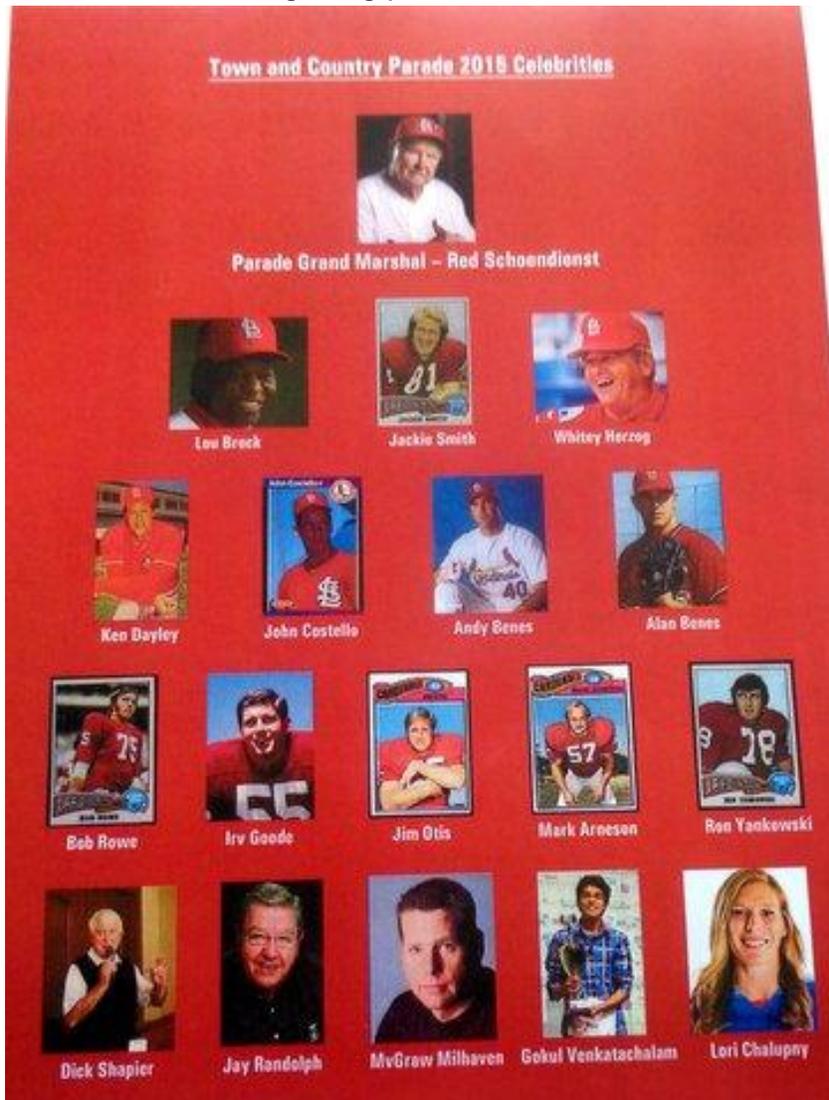
One member mentioned that a city employee who is a member of the Scottish Rite might be able to get an honor guard for at the starting point for those veterans riding in the parade.

It was also mentioned they had an older bagpipe player who would not be able to march but might be able to sit in a convertible and play the bagpipes. I suggested if he was going to be playing for the entire one-hour parade you might want to find someone who is deaf and owns a convertible.



Another suggestion was to have a child from the Make a Wish Foundation ride on a fire truck on in a car with a sports celebrity.

There was also a discussion of the need to get Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to walk along the front of the parade handing out American flags. As this parade grows and grows I think a better use for Scouts would be to have them be spectators. I'm more worried about having a big parade with no one to watch it.



**REAL ESTATE: HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW AND COMING IN A YEAR:  
What a Difference a Day Makes, Williamsburg Estate at Clayton Road.**

Sunday August 23



Monday August 24



Fall of 2016 or spring of 2017



**TARA ON CLAYTON ROAD** There were actually two places that fit that description, both on the south side of the street. One is still standing east of Ballas Road but in poor condition having been vacant for three years or longer. The one that is now gone was at 13704 Clayton Road.



**TREE CITY USA?** Since Town and Country likes to brag how it is has a Tree City USA designation, clearly the Architectural Review Board, Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Aldermen would take care to keep as few trees from being killed for a building project, right? Wrong! All the tall majestic fir trees in front of the the house on Clayton Road are now gone.



Below is the 18,600 sq ft house planned for the property



And on Mason Road: They actually left a few trees on the property where former Alderwoman Patty Wiggins used to live on Mason Road.



Coming soon: See below



**Sensible sized Houses:** Below is a house at 1148 Weidman Road. It is three doors south of Clayton Road and sits on a shotgun sized one-acre lot. It looks like a reasonable size compared to the 6,000 to 8,000 French Provincial-English castle monster homes. It is 3,700 square feet but appears to be over priced as it has been on the market for 265 days at a price of \$794,500.



**TOWN AND COUNTRY ESTATES KEEPS GETTING AWAY WITH SIGN ON CITY EASEMENT OF A CITY STREET THAT TELLS THE PUBLIC TO STAY AWAY:**

Residents of the Town and Country Estates received a portion of their requested Neighborhood Beautification Grant this year from the Board of Aldermen. Despite the

streets in the subdivision being city owned and maintained streets, the subdivision insisted in keeping up a sign saying "Residents Only" instead of a simply "Street Not Thru" sign.



When voting for the Beautification Grant several alderpersons suggested to subdivision trustees that the "Residents Only" sign be removed since tax money was being used for the grant and the maintenance of the street.

I asked city Services Director and Public Works Director Craig Wilde if the sign was on city road easement. He said it was. I then asked why he doesn't take it down. He said he planned to asked trustees again about it. This was a month ago and the sign is still up.

My suggestion: Give them 20-days to change the sing or removed it from the city street right of way and replace it with a standard No Thru Traffic sign.

## **UNAPPROVED CHESTERFIELD NEWSLETTER 137**



**September 7, 2015**

**CHESTERFIELD'S JULY CRIME AND POLICE ACTIVITY REPORT:** Crime stats leveled off in July for the Chesterfield Police being close to the same in July of 2014 in many categories. However Year to Date for 2015 compared to 2014 overall crime is up 48-percent. Keep in mind it is still a very low crime rate compared with national averages.

<b>OFFENSE</b>	<b>July 2015</b>	<b>YTD 2015</b>	<b>JULY 2014</b>	<b>YTD 2014</b>
Forcible Rape	2	4	0	2
Other Sex Offenses	1	5	0	6
Robbery	0	8	0	2
Assault	11	105	13	98
<b>BURGLARY</b>				
Residential	5	22	7	21
Commercial	2	14	0	2
<b>LARCENY</b>				
Felony	23	142	23	124
Misdemeanor	37	267	46	246
Auto Theft	1	11	1	5
Arson	0	0	1	1
Bad checks/Fraud	37	816*	13	77
Vandalism	10	63	12	56
Drug Violations	9	53	8	67
DWI	7	74	19	115
<b>CRIME TOTALS</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>1585</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>822</b>
<b>ARRESTS</b>				
Adults	97	778	157	1050
Juveniles	15	101	17	122
<b>TRAFFIC</b>				
Vehicle Accidents	153	1008	151	945

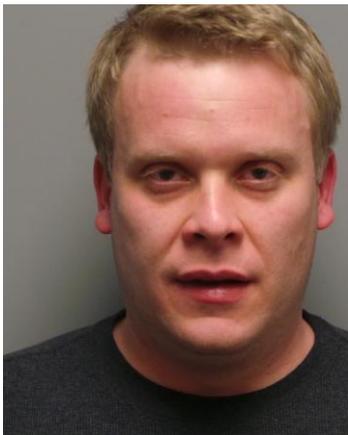
Fatalities	0	1	0	4
Injuries	32	197	36	204
Traffic Warnings Issued	348	2415	525	3179
Parking Citations	29	143	9	110
Traffic Citations	815	5619	1084	7252
Recovered Stolen Autos	0	4	0	2
Radio Assignments	3237	26353	5110	32632
Alarms	129	918	130	879

\* 2015 fraud stats contain a large number of IRS tax return frauds of criminals using victim's social security numbers to file false returns.

**LOVE THY NEIGHBOR! CHESTERFIELD MAN CHARGED WITH BURGLARY FIRST DEGREE FOR BREAKING INTO HIS NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE.** Chesterfield's crime stats are up this year and the police don't need any increase in crime by a guy walking across the street and breaking into a neighbor's house. But that is what happened on the morning of May 2, 2015.

According to charges file by Chesterfield Police, Steven Pretak, 31 of 54 White Plains Drive decided to walk across the street to the home of David and Sarah Stevens at 51 White Plains, break into the garage and steal the leaf blower, valued at \$300. He was seen and confronted causing him to abandon the leaf blower.

Since the garage was attached to the house and someone was home at the time, the crime has been upgraded to Burglary 1st Degree. Pretak was arrested by Chesterfield Police on the day of the crime and released pending warrant application. A warrant was issued on June 29. He was arrested on the warrant on August 28.



Steven Pretak

If you look closely at Pretak's eyes you might get the impression alcohol was involved during the commission of this crime.

In November of 2007 Pretak was arrested for DWI and refused to take a breath test. In August of 2014 a judgment for \$2,395.48 was issued against him in the St. Louis County Circuit Courts for accepting three months of unemployment benefits that he was not entitled to receive. The judgment is still listed as unpaid.

**MONARCH GIVES OUT PLAQUES FOR CHESTERFIELD AQUATIC CENTER LIFEGUARDS SAVING A 3-YEAR-OLD. After the ceremony City of Chesterfield contractor refused to to let them tell what happened.** At the August 25th meeting of the Monarch Fire Protection District three lifeguards and a nurse were honored for saving the life of a 3-year-old boy who had stopped breathing after drowning at the city's Aquatic Park.



From left to right, Kaleigh Kelso from Chesterfield, Victoria Helfert of Ballwin, Hannah Johnson of Chesterfield and Monarch Board president Robin Harris. Nurse Jennifer Barake was also honored.

Hannah Johnson of Chesterfield was tearing up during the presentation that included plaques given to her, Kaleigh Kelso of Chesterfield and Victoria Helfert of Ballwin. Jennifer Barake, a nurse, who was at the pool with her 5-year-old son, was also honored for assisting the lifeguards in the rescue.

The rescue occurred on July 14 at 6pm. After the ceremony West Magazine reporter Jim Erikson and myself followed the four outside of the board chambers. Erikson asked one of the lifeguards to tell him what happened. She said she couldn't. She had been told any questions should be directed to to a Midwest Pool company official. Midwest Pool has the contract to provide lifeguards at the Chesterfield Aquatic Center.

Crissy Withrow, a Midwest Pool supervisor, was at the ceremony and actually got a plaque, even though she wasn't present at the time of the incident. She declined to give a detailed answer.

So I went to ask Jennifer Barake, the nurse and Chesterfield resident what happened. She was happy to tell me how she was with her 5-year-old son when she heard the mother of the 3-year-old scream. She got someone to look after her son and she went to help the lifeguards. Barake is a critical care nurse so CPR is a regular event for her.

A Monarch command officer and a firefighter/paramedic were close by driving to a firehouse when the call came out of a "possible drowning victim with CPR in progress." When they arrived the child was alert and talking. He was watching cartoons in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.

Steve Harris from KMOV was there to do a segment for Harris' Heroes that would air in 10 days on the 5am and 5pm newscast. I'm not sure why the Midwest Pool corporate rules won't let the college student lifeguards talk about saving a life. Now if someone drowned that would be an entirely different matter.



**FIRE DISTRICT HANDS OUT AN AWARD, BUT MISSPELLS THE HONOREE'S NAME:** The first words from Central Missouri State University student and summer lifeguard Kaleigh Kelso after receiving the award was "They misspelled my name."



Kelsa is a very uncommon girl's first name it is an even more uncommon last name. According to the website Rootsireland.ie there are 144 census records ever for someone with the last name of Kelsa, while Kelso has 2,804,321 on file. I am told Monarch will be sending a new plaque to Kaleigh with her last name spelled correctly.

### **THE PROBLEMS WITH UBER INCLUDING THE ONE NO ONE IS TALKING ABOUT.**

The uproar from the left about how unfair it is for the St. Louis Taxi Commission to keep Uber out of the area unless drivers submit to fingerprint criminal record checks is stupid.

As someone who oversaw and investigated taxi drivers, did routine enforcement duties and and complex criminal investigations for Maryland's largest political subdivision, Washington DC suburb Montgomery County, there is a huge difference between an instant record checks and a fingerprint record check. The FBI fingerprint check provides so much more information missed by computer checks.

**Taxicab 101:** Here is a quick lesson. The person riding in the backseat of the taxicab is not the taxicab company's or Uber's customer. It is the person behind the wheel. When I returned to Missouri in 2006, cabbies were paying about \$110 a day to rent the cab, plus paying for gasoline in Maryland. In 2005 most of the cabs were former Ford

police cars that used a lot of gasoline. The cab driver had to make well over \$200 in fares daily to earn a meager living. In New York City it costs a cabdriver \$1,000 a week to rent a cab. While rent was cheaper in St. Louis in 2006, more like \$85 a day, I'm sure it is well above \$100 a day now.

For that money the cab companies provide limited insurance coverage, dispatch services and a car with a government license to be operated as a taxicab.

**The juggling act:** As the first person hire to be the cab cop in a community of closed to 1,000,000 I quickly learned I had five balls to keep juggling.

## **1 Protect the Public**

**Cars)** The first ball was the protection, health safety and welfare of the public. The first thing to do was make sure the vehicles were safe. That is not as easy as it sounds. I dealt with five taxi companies. Four owned by Muslims and the largest owned by a Caucasian American who owned about 55-percent of the cabs on the road. Guess who my biggest problem was? Yep it is the White American. The companies owned by immigrants quickly fell into line and received almost no citations. While I wrote over 100 citations a year to the big company for having cabs with suspended license plates for failing to take emission tests (the catalytic converters were shot after 2-years of constant operation as police cars) and other violations.

I bought large "Out of Service" stickers to be placed on cabs with suspended licenses, burned out headlights, filthy interiors. Most went on cabs belonging to the big company.

Every taxi meter had to be checked for accuracy at least once a year to make sure people were not being cheated.

This is next to impossible to do with Uber. The cars aren't licensed they can change at a whim and they don't have meters.

**1a People)** The next problem was to be sure the drivers did not have criminal records or bad driving records. I had computer access to the driver records, the local criminal checks missed too much. Not only are there programs when cabdrivers transport school kids, they also take disabled young adults to colleges and disabled adults to medical appointments and even grocery shopping on government funded programs.

Contrary to what Uber claims, non fingerprint FBI criminal checks miss numerous arrests. I hate to say this but a cab driver pulling behind an out of business gas station

and having sex with a disabled mentally handicapped 20-year-old girl he was taking to junior college was not an isolated investigation I handled.

The Medicare and Medicaid fraud was also impressive. I began investigations that spent hundreds of hours on going through billing records of drivers taking people to non-existent medical appointments with the drivers then splitting the money with the alleged patient. The large taxicab company wouldn't report these offenses because they received a 7-percent administrative fee for booking Medicare and Medicaid trips.

**1c Bombers)** I kid you not. The number one method of delivering a car bomb to a target worldwide in 2000 was in a taxicab, because it did not look out of place. Of course most of these bombings were occurring in the Middle East, but it was something not to ignore. The problem for me was Montgomery County was the only jurisdiction that required a percentage of cabs to be wheelchair accessible. These were hard for the cab companies to rent, because trips involved off the meter time loading and unloading passengers. It was more work and many disabled persons were on fixed incomes and were bad tippers. The companies were anxious to rent these vans.

A handicap van would make a wonderful bomb carrier and there were always special places for them to park next to government buildings. It was a big enough issue that I had a FBI agent as a 24/7 contact. We also developed a couple of foreign national informants who would report when other foreign national drivers were talking about hating the United States or praising terrorist attacks in Europe. Of course this is a bigger issue in Washington, DC than in St. Louis but individual random attacks are now occurring all over the country.

**2) Hospitality Industry!** It was important to make sure hotels, restaurants, convention centers have safe and reliable cab service. With a reputation of bad ground transportation repeat bookings are not likely to happen.

**3) Transportation** Cabs are often the last step in a transit trip home from a bus or subway center. If people can't get home from the subway or transit center, they quit using mass transit and add more cars to the street.

**4) The taxicab industry** That's right, if the public couldn't get clean, safe vehicle to show up with drivers who have safe driving records and no criminal records the industry itself is hurt.

**5) Taxicab Drivers** You have to protect the drivers from unfair competition, including unlicensed "gypsy cabs" and limo drivers trying to act as cab drivers from working in their area during economic downturns.

**THE UBER EFFECT ON LIVES:** At first Uber was a new way to summons a ride, by using social media. But cab companies eventually figured this out.



What most people don't realize is how unfair Uber is to the small business man's investment. Where I worked in Maryland about 20-percent of the cab licenses were held by private individual licensees. The cost in 2006 was around \$50,000 on the open market. In St. Louis 40-percent of taxi licenses are owned and can be sold by private individuals.

By doubling the number of cab drivers by adding Uber to the mix you have seriously devalued an investment made by lower middle class people trying to make a better life for themselves. In New York City a private Taxi Medallion has dropped in value by 30-percent since Uber hit the streets. Also by doubling the number of cabs on the street you will make it almost impossible for drivers renting cabs to make a living wage.

By having too many offering taxi service customers eventually get hurt. Washington DC did not restrict the number of cab drivers. They kept issuing cab drivers permits. Until recently DC was the only major city where cabs did not have meters. (They do now.) They used to have zones and would charge you depending how many zones they drove into. This often resulted in out of the way routes or passengers being let off at the side door of a hotel because it was in a different zone than the front door. Most DC cabs are not radio dispatched and things would get ruthless. If you arrived early in the morning at 3am by train at Union Station the scarcity of cabs would have drivers quoting outrageous prices.

I got involved with them because they would go to the suburbs trying to get business because the competition was so intense in DC. Once or twice a month I would go

undercover with a suitcase in hand looking like I was an airport fare and hail DC cabs cruising by Maryland hotels and then charge the drivers once I was picked up.



Washington DC cabs at Union Station

St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay is a big fan of Uber and is pushing Uber to be licensed by the Taxi Commission without drivers submitting to fingerprint checks. Apparently Slay has little regard for the safety of citizens and visitors or the the economical well being of existing drivers who are residents and voters.

Steve Stenger appears to be supporting the Taxi Commission in their resistance in allowing Uber to follow different rules than all the other cabdrivers.



I sent a letter and resume to Stenger offering to serve on the Taxi & Limo Commission since I had knowledge and experience with the industry and no connection to companies, driver groups or Uber. Commissioners receive no pay. I did not receive even an acknowledgment of my letter from Stenger's office.

**ST. LOUIS'S TELEVISION PIONEER DIES:** Keith Gunther, 100, died in hospice care after several illnesses on Saturday evening August 30. Gunther was a programmer, the program director and later General Manager of the first television station in St. Louis, KSD-TV, owned by the Pulitzer Corporation, which also owned KSD Radio and the Post-Dispatch.



Gunther gives college students an inside tour of KSD in 1949. (Remember this was still post-WWII and many college students were older. Also the dress code was a lot different then.)

After 4-years in the Navy during WWII, Gunther helped put KSD-TV on the air in 1947. It was one of the first post WWII television stations in the nation to go on the air. He retired in 1982.

KSDK mentioned Gunther's death on their website four days after he died and several hours after the family's paid obituary appeared in the Post-Dispatch, but not on a newscast. Apparently it is true, unless you are a former president or Hall of Fame ball player, if you live too long no one remembers you.

**RESTAURANT REVIEW: THE WALNUT GRILL ELLISVILLE** I think I liked Chevy's Tex-Mex better. The Chevy's restaurant in the shopping center on the southwest side of Clayton and Clarkson Roads went out of business several years ago. I ate there once and had a nice lunch. I was wanting to try the new place that took over the space so when neighbors offered to take my wife and I to the Walnut Grill I jumped at the chance.

The Walnut Grill is a small chain with five restaurants in Pennsylvania and the one in Ellisville.



We arrived at 7:20 on a Wednesday night. You could not find a spot on the parking lot near the restaurant. However we went in and found the dining room was over half empty. The crowd was people under-30 on the patio.

Our hosts ordered the Chicken Spiedini (\$17) and a walnut salad, plus Balsminic Chicken and mashed potatoes.



They reported the food was fine, but they only ate half of the portion and did not want to take any leftovers home. I tried the mash potatoes. They are made with Ranch Dressing. Ranch dressing might be good on salads, but it is awful mixed in with mashed potatoes.

My wife, who lived in Rome for a year, ordered the Parmesan Crusted Chicken and Gnocchi. Her report was the gnocchi was overcooked and the chicken was "okay."



The place has "Grill" in its name so I ordered the strip steak, \$24. I should have known better since they only had three "grill meat items."



The first clue the steak was not going to be that good was that it was covered in other stuff hiding the flavor of the meat. In this case it was gorgonzola bacon-butter, wild mushrooms (why would someone want to put a fungus on a steak?) and crispy onions.

The crispy onions belong in the holiday green bean casserole. I scrapped off the mushrooms (they are a fungus the same as athlete's foot) and deposited them on my wife's plate. The first two slices of the steak were filled with grizzle as were the last two. The middle of the steak was tender but was overpowered by the taste of everything else that had been piled on it.

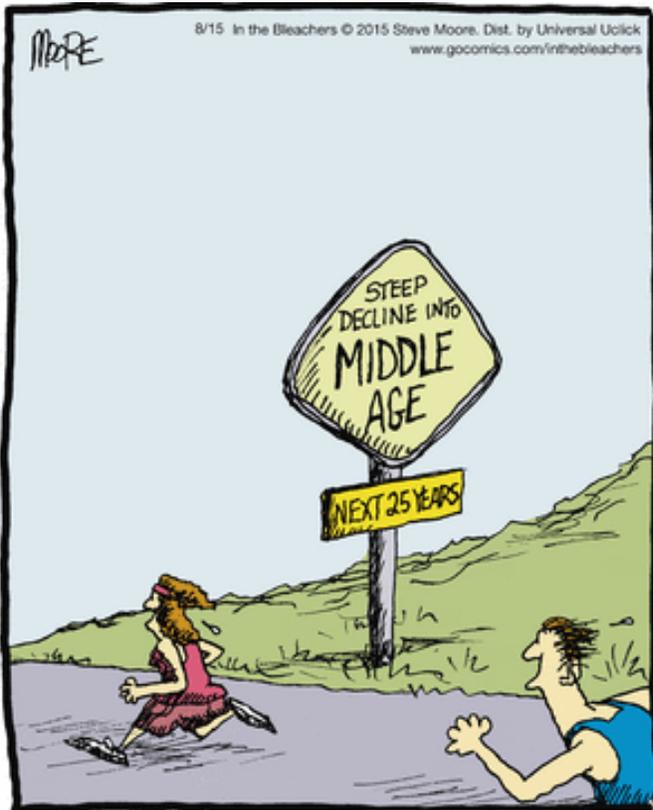
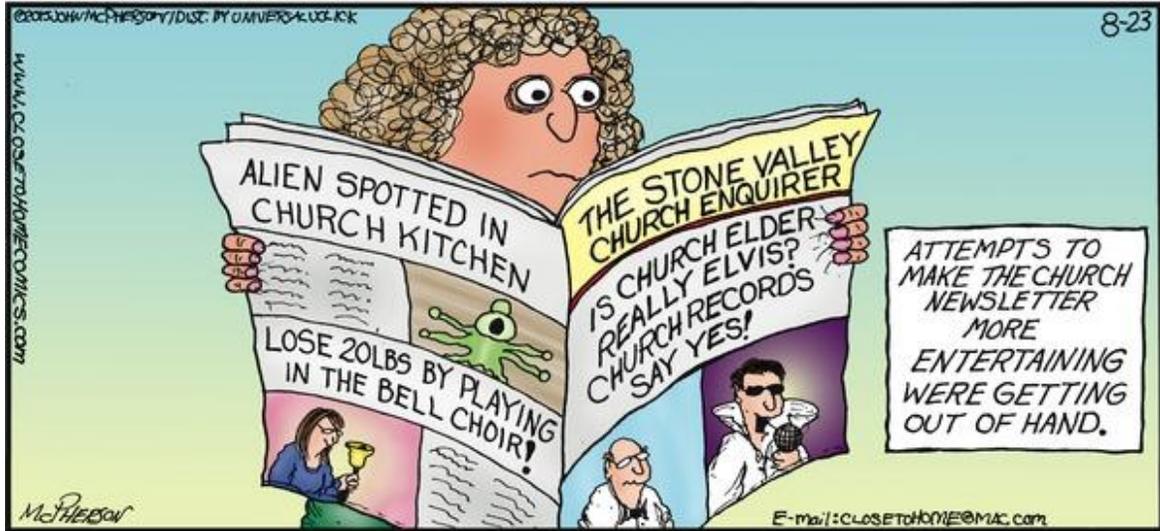
The best part of the meal were the asparagus and the baked potato.

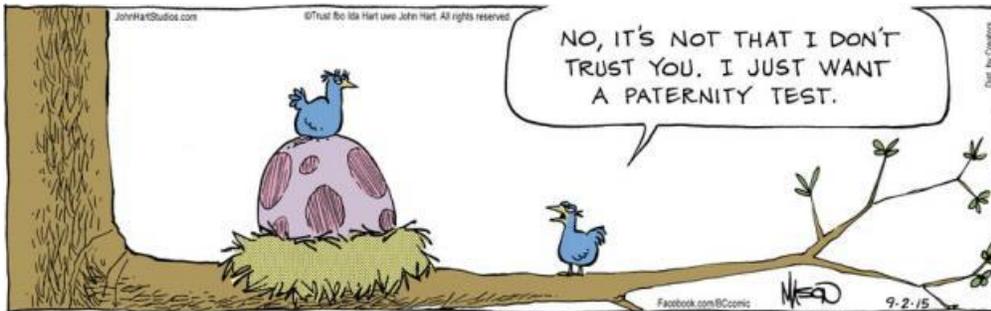
After leaving I thanked out hosts, as I had wanted to try the Walnut Grill for some time.

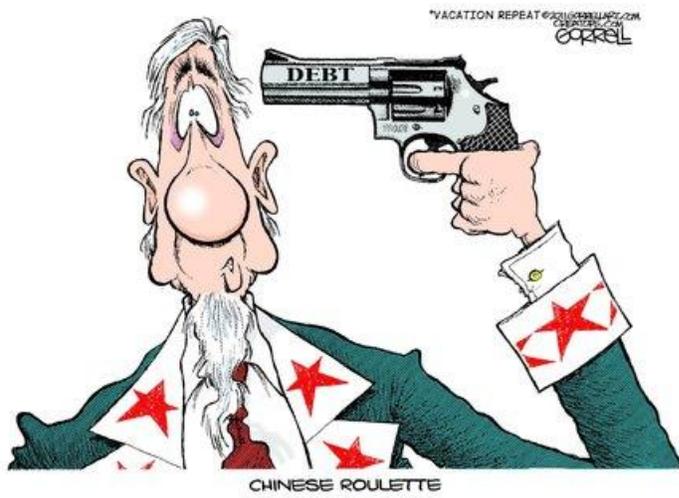
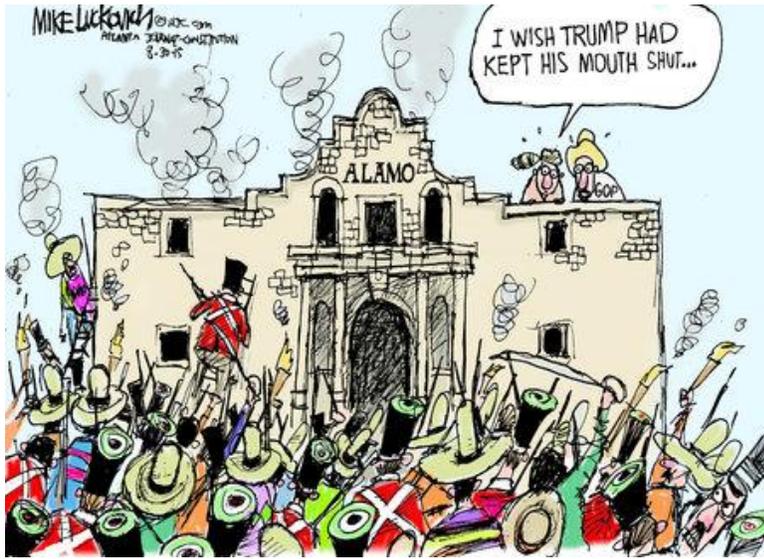
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**BY JOHN McPHERSON**







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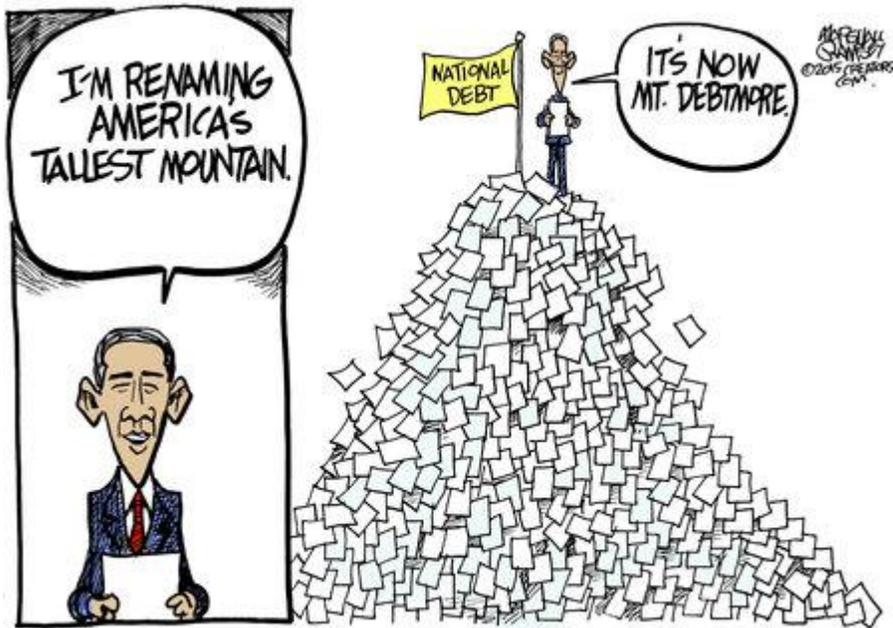
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