Observations of Montgomery County Life in the Year 2016

By Helen Hudson

**January 1, 2016**

Judge Harry Siamas stood before a city council chamber filled with recently elected officials from every town in Montgomery County, their spouses and their families, everyone dressed in holiday attire. The Swearing In Ceremony began. Judge Siamas noted that the oath they were about to take in this year of Indiana’s Bicentennial was virtually the same oath that “thousands of men and women before you have taken since Indiana became a state in 1816.” “Keep that in mind,” he noted and they began. “Do you swear to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Indiana?” and then, “Do you swear to faithfully, impartially, and diligently discharge the duties of your office according to law and the best of your abilities?” All those elected in towns throughout the county (Linden and Darlington were present) and those elected for the county seat city council positions in Crawfordsville replied in the affirmative.

In this Bicentennial and Leap Year, Crawfordsville’s mayor, Todd Barton, then spoke a few words. It is Republican Barton’s second term and under his leadership the city has recently been awarded the highly prestigious Stellar Grant by the State of Indiana. Barton spoke of the privilege it is to serve, that each of these present slated to fill offices, have been given “a rare opportunity to make a difference.” The group then adjourned to the area outside the chamber room for a reception provided by the League of Women Voters.

Out in the larger world, a five-year-old war still rages in Syria which is bringing not only Middle Eastern tensions between Sunni and Shiite Muslims to the fore but is currently pitting Russian and U.S. foreign policies against one another as Russia continues to bomb in Syria. Smaller wars rage in Yemen, in Libya, and in parts of Africa, fueled especially by groups who identify with militant Islam, groups such as ISIS (known as Daesh) in Arabic.

Europe is affected broadly by this issue, mainly in the form of millions of migrants and refugees fleeing the unstable, dangerous conditions in their Near Eastern and African homelands. European leaders are strongly divided about how to handle this crisis, the largest population movement since World War II. On this side of the Atlantic, the US and Canada have taken two polar opposite views of handling refugees. Canada is receiving Syrian refugees with open arms while the US (in the midst of a presidential election campaign) has been reluctant. President Obama (in his second term) has agreed to take in 35,000 refugees, but the many Republican candidates currently running for president, almost to a person, wish to limit this number or to take in none at all.

The same division is expressed about how to deal with illegal immigrants residing in the United States.

As I write in January, Hilary Clinton is the strong frontrunner in the small field of Democrats running though the nation has been galvanized by the highly successful grassroots campaign of Senator Bernie Sanders who has two million supporters, most of whom have contributed to his campaign in amounts less than $100. On the Republican side, the shocking frontrunner at this point is Donald Trump, a self-declared and self-funded business tycoon who pays no attention to either decency or factuality. So far, to the surprise of thinking men and women throughout the nation, he has not paid a price for such inauthenticity and racist language. He is, in the words of a local man, “a megaphone for people’s fears.” Other strong contenders at this time are Governor Chris Christie, Senator Ted Cruz, and Senator Marco Rubio, the latter two men notable as the first Latino candidates fielded at the national level.

**January 27, 2016**

As the month got underway—this Bi-Centennial Year in the State—the most notable thing had little to do with human marking of time, and very much to do with how we humans have been using our planet over that time period. On January 9, we had flocks of robins in our yard. I’ve seen them elsewhere in Crawfordsville, especially in the crabapple trees where they find fruit. This is unheard of. Traditionally robins fly south in October, but our weather in the 40s until mid-month January has encouraged them to linger. On the day mid-month when the weatherman let us know that temperatures would finally dip down to seasonal levels, I headed out to the Crawfordsville High School’s raised bed gardens to harvest dill and cilantro which had begun to grow in the unseasonably warm weather. News to the future: this is not remotely Midwest weather as those of us from the 20th century knew winter. Scientists have just reported too that 2015 was the hottest year recorded on the planet since records have been kept. Before it, 2014 was the hottest….

On the national and international levels, in the human day-to-day world, the US stock markets dipped more in a month than in any January in history. Currently here at month’s end this continues and has become known as the “Market freakout of 2016.” Economists tie this to China’s slowing economy, China’s stock market bubble, and the fact that crude oil prices are currently below $30/barrel as Saudi Arabia dumps oil on the market on the eve of Iran entering back into the international oil market.

President Putin of Russia (facing his own collapsing economy) had entered independent territory in Ukraine in 2014, notably just on the heels of the Olympic Games that were held in Sochi. Russia is now bombing Syria (in its 5th year of Civil War) in support of the Assad regime. Wars continue in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya.)

The Presidential Campaign heats up as the Iowa Caucuses take place on February 1. For c. 40 years now, this has been the first measure of the national temperature. Sanders has gained on Clinton on the Democratic side and on the Republican side, Donald Trump still leads in the polls despite saying outrageous things such as “I could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue in NYC and still lead in the polls.” He taps into a frightened underbelly of America that fears the great division between the so-called 1% and the 99%. Our country has become dramatically economically divided.

Here in Indiana, we might note that our infrastructure is in serious need of repair (especially highways and bridges); currently our state is trapped with a low fixed property tax which makes it difficult to fund these necessities. Lawmakers are looking at last to raising taxes on the road’s users, namely automobile drivers and, especially, long distance trucks.

In its first days of the session, our state legislature is in a serious quarrel over what is called RFRA (Religious Freedom Restoration Act). Rather than following a national trend and federal law which allows all couples—heterosexual, gay, trans-gender—to marry, the Indiana legislature has passed what is known as “Super-RFRA,” allowing anyone who claims a religious exemption the right to discriminate against LGBT Hoosiers, visitors and other minorities” according to the Human Rights Commission. Privately Senator Phil Boots of Crawfordsville listed as one of the “extreme anti-LGBT Republican Senators” on the Human Rights Commission website has said, “I wish this [RFRA] would go away.”

Here in Montgomery County, information and demonstration sessions are being held about our coming Vote Centers, replacing the old precinct system. Vote Centers will allow citizens to vote electronically on computers for the first time, and any voter may vote at any Vote Center.

Currently Indiana is facing a major teacher shortage and, as has been the case in varying degrees for the past couple of decades, debate goes on over how often and how students should be tested in school to produce comparative statistics. The current program, ISTEP, which has been in place for well over a decade, is being replaced, and schools will not be bound by students’ scores from the previous school year. Also, in this era of more and more electronic communication, a move is on by the state legislature to push to teach cursive writing in schools again. In 2011, the IDOE stopped requiring schools to teach cursive writing. All local principals interviewed stress the importance of retaining this skill for students to be able to produce such writing and so they will be able to read it. Current scientific studies also show that crucial links among brain-hand-eye are lost along with this skill. (I wish I could see how you in the future regard the value of cursive writing.)

Also here in town, the Chamber of Commerce continues to meet at their “Breakfast Before Business” meetings each month. At the January meeting, Mayor Todd Barton and Economic Development Director Kirsten Clary note that a particular concern is Crawfordsville’s housing stock: “the equation has completely changed.” Meanwhile, Wabash College continues to partner with the community with entrepreneurial activities.

The local papers (The *Journal Review* and *The Paper of Montgomery County*) report often on activities surrounding implementation of the Stellar Grant. St. Elizabeth Health, Crawfordville’s local hospital, is planning a $155 million investment in the hospital including a new emergency room and more imaging equipment. They also plan to partner with the new Marian University Medical School to bring family practice doctoral students to the community.

Main Street held its annual meeting in January and leadership passed from Deanna Durrett to Sue Lucas. This organization will be vital to the implementation of the Stellar Grant.

**February 11, 2016**

On February 1, the day of the Iowa Caucuses (in 2016, and for the past 40 years or so, these in-person meetings all over the state of Iowa mark our country’s first show of how the Presidential candidates are faring), with a blizzard imminent out on the Great Plains; we here in Indiana we experiencing unseasonably mild weather. Skeins of sandhill cranes passed over the county headed North! Someone also shot a photo of a dandelion in bloom and posted it on Facebook with the tagline, “What month is this?”

Here and now, with the month progressed into double digits, the situation has reversed: we have iron cold weather with temperatures in the teens and with wind. A bit of snow has fallen. Meanwhile out in Denver, Colorado yesterday, it was 70 degrees and people were eating ice cream outside. (In 2016, we keep good track of each other’s ‘weathers’ not only via the Weather Channel on television but also via Facebook where people post everything from a photo of what they ate for dinner, to prayers, to political videos, to dandelions, ice cream, and sandhill cranes. Reputedly the most popular thing to view on Facebook in this era are cat videos. Yes, videos of kittens. Facebook is also full of poltical commentary from every notch along the spectrum.

Local public news kicked off this month on February 1 when Dale Petrie, Mayor Barton’s Manager for the Stellar Grant, gave a presentation to Lunch with the League, a community forum offered each month by the League of Women Voters. Interest brought out over 70 people to this event. Petrie began by noting that “Stellar is a designation not a grant. It allows the selected city to ‘walk to the head of the line’ when applying for grants.” Petrie adds that we won on our fourth try for the grant because “we wrote our own grant.” Mayor Barton and Brandi Allen wrote that grant based on our earlier attempts that had been written up by an engineering firm. The first five months since we’ve been awarded have been used “to get everyone on the same page.” The Pocket Park will be the first project we’ll see. Public input hearing will be held for that on February 17. Another feature of our community that will help fire Stellar—with its various projects (See detail in this time capsule.) is that Crawfordsville owns our own utilities.

On February 2, Mayor Barton addressed citizens at Crawfordsville High School when he delivered his “State of the Community” address. Director of Indiana West Advantage and City Councilman Phil Bane also addressed the assembled crowd. This proved an exciting evening as the community became aware of the many, many projects that the city and county cooperatively are undertaking. Clary emphasized especially how vital it is that city and county entities continue to work together as they have to make work on the courthouse and on the Ben Hur building happen.

Klary also emphasized that the big issue here in the community is to build up a workforce for the future. With the national trend of “youth urbanization” continuing, we have to be able to recruit workers, as the Baby Boomers retire, who can keep this community vigorous and pointing forward. She points toward programs in cooperation with schools and colleges, especially Ivy Tech that will strength this.

Out on the national campaign trail, Hillary Clinton squeaked by Bernie Sanders in the Iowa primary; on the Republican side, Ted Cruz won the endorsement of the most Iowa caucus goers. This week the first primary was held. By designation, New Hampshire is declared “the first in the nation”: Some say, Iowa picks corn and New Hampshire picks presidents. Let’s mull over the result then of Donald Trump (R) and Bernie Sanders (D) having decidedly won victories in that race. The pundits are madly abuzz about what this means for the nation. You, the casual Crawfordsville readers of 2116, should recall that Trump is a brash, rude, forthright businessman with no experience in politics whatsoever; Sanders, in contrast, has been known as a hard-working Senator from Vermont for over three decades. Trump’s campaign is funded with his own money from his vast fortune while Sanders’ is being funded by millions of donations of $100 or less.

Meanwhile, in the typically quieter realm of culture, 2016 represents the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, and with that anniversary come myriad celebrations of The Bard’s work being projected to honor the year, and the presence of one of the Folio Editions of Shakespeare’s plays traveling around the country. From Santa Fe to Chicago (Crawfordsville’s nearest world city), the USA is celebrating the most honored (by far) literary figure in our language. Chicago itself has dozens and dozens of exceptional performances at the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre and all over the city. Every imaginable format—from lectures to puppet shows, to plays in the parks, the city is touting this special linkage, one of the most integral in its history. Of note to contemporary historians, a bare-stage production of “King Lear” in Belorussian is currently being performed (February 5-14). The company itself is Belorussian but in exile from the performers’ own country which Europeans know as existing “under the last dictator in Europe.” Currently Belorussia is the only European nation that has capital punishment, for instance. This vital, visceral performance of Lear—props include peanut butter, eggs, dozens of tin cups, dirt, water, and tarps—has powerful resonance as the power of the mad medieval king, tearing his own society apart, echoes that of Vladimir Lukashenko the so-called dictator of present-day Belorus. The language Belorrussian is banned in its own nation in most places; Lukashenko currently takes his 11-year-old son with him on all professional travels, presumably grooming him for later take-over. Most Belorissians boycotted last fall’s election, describing it as a sham.

In the realm of public health here in early February, nearly all attention is focused on Zika Virus, now confirmed here in the US after having first moved into Brazil last May. This virus is very common in the tropics and is passed to humans via mosquito bites. There is no inoculation against it. Typically symptoms are mild: red eyes, fever, rash, achy joints. However, in recent months—and Brazil has become the unfortunate test case for this—it has been learned that the presence of Zika virus in a pregnant woman brings with it the high risk of microcephaly in the infant. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) website encourages people to avoid mosquito bites. It is currently being determined whether Zika can be transmitted sexually or via bodily fluids. Speculation is also that this rampant activity is related to climate change.

**February 25, 2016**

A week ago yesterday (February 17) our community was ripped asunder by a tragic crime. A c. 15-year employee of Wabash College (age 61) is accused and is surely guilty of murdering his niece (age 31) on her birthday and her four-year-old son in Zionsville. The man, Lucius O. Hamilton III, carried out the crime and then drove to Wabash College campus—as if to work—checked out a college van and disappeared for a few hours. When the crime was uncovered, the Wabash College campus was locked down and classes were cancelled as police searched for the suspect whom they tracked to a downtown Indianapolis hotel where he committed suicide in a room. This inexplicable horror is said to have been motivated by money: Hamilton and his niece were both inheritors of a large fortune from a father/grandfather’s estate. Hamilton leaves a wife and children. Giehl (the niece) leaves a husband.

In the way of more ordinary events, Crawfordsville’s public golf course—as are many others in small towns around the state—is under scrutiny because it costs the municipality so much to run and the revenues golf courses bring in are tens of thousands of dollars below what they cost to maintain. (Crawfordsville currently here in 2016 has two golf courses, one a private one at the Country Club and a public one east of town.) Since golfers are often leaders in the community (Golf has been a leading businessman’s pastime for over half a century), I wonder if you will still find golf to be the keystone entertainment feature in 2116 that people, especially businessmen, do now. There is even an entire television network dedicated to the sport.

Our community was at its civic best earlier this week when the city held a public hearing on the proposed pocket park for downtown Crawfordsville. This project is part of the Stellar Project and this community input meeting was sponsored and facilitated by a Wabash College Democracy and Public Discourse class. It was exceptionally well attended. The piece or property in question is at the southwest corner of Washington and Pike Streets. Its anticipated use got lively input from the public. Here in the early part of this century, communities are eager to return some green space to their downtown areas. Conversation ranged over how that green space could look. Perhaps it could also include sculptures that kids could play on (similar to the Outdoor Sculpture Garden at the IMA in Indianapolis), perhaps it would include berms at the margins of the streets so little ones wouldn’t stray so easily into traffic. This location is strategic because it borders Pike Street which, in the last few years, has become site of Crawfordsville’s very popular summer Farmers’ Market. Across the street to the south is the c. ten-year-old beautiful new Crawfordsville District Public Library, so this space is at the heart of pedestrian activity. Those in charge were delighted with the large attendance by business people, citizens, and downtown merchants.

As I write, we have had one of the only snowfalls of our dry, mild winter here in west central Indiana. This gives me occasion to speak to you future Crawfordsvillians about how we regard weather at this point in time. Those of us over the age of 50 well remember, especially those of us raised on farms, that weather reports were broadcast a couple of times a day, but mainly people still knew the habits of the planet enough to “look West,” or to smell the air, or feel the wind and know much about the weather. Here in the early era of social media, digital weather, improved radar, and all the rest of it, we seem to have stumbled into a boomerang effect: though we have far more sources and an endless feed about weather fronts and storms, because people share this so often and so widely, endlessly, really, the whole culture seems oddly anxious about weather. Take this storm: we have little snow on the ground because the temperature stayed above freezing. That hasn’t prevented, though, endless handwringing about whether to cancel events, and whether school will be delayed two hours. Should one drive to a doctor’s appointment, and the like. This occupies an exceptional amount of wasted thinking time among the public. This dithering is led by the Weather Channel and local networks who “trail” it every hour, suggesting potential disaster MAY be in the making. It is an odd and frustrating phenomenon.

Maybe the same could be said about the 2016 election battle that is now four contests in. At this point national pundits are already “calling it” for Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The nation waits, the public rails. Trump is the friend of the “poorly educated” as he himself has said. People are comparing him to—of all people—Adolf Hitler because of his bombastic ways, his shallow knowledge. Bernie Sanders still commands much attention on the left, and, in fact, is a counterpart for disaffection at the other end of the spectrum—among the young and minorities especially. Lots of handwringing too about this already here nine months before the election. The gestation period begins…..

**March 11, 2016**

A snapshot from here in almost mid-March. Since I’ve written, the news has continued to be filled with endless stories about the political campaign. That’s the nature of things in our culture where we want—or at least have—24/7 news coverage and all sorts of newish media for broadcasting it. A century ago there was no television and radio was at its dawn. Now here in the early years of the 21st century we have the old media of radio and television (which still flourish) but since the worldwide web has become part of everyone’s life in this country during the last 20 years, all of this frenzy of reporters and reporting has metastasized madly through media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, the so-called social media as well as through endless websites and networks. As I’m typing here, taking advantage of word processing and easy electronic storage, I’m listening to NPR (National Public Radio) which along with public television (PBS) bring consumers advertising-free news and features. As it was billed at its founding in the 1970s, “educational television.”

Every one of these media was on high alert last night in Chicago when violence broke out at a planned Donald Trump rally at the University of Illinois-Chicago. During this last month, incidents of violence have been breaking out at Trump’s rallies. Since I’ve last written, he continues to gain steam. Earlier candidates C. Christie and B. Carson have thrown their support to him. Trump, Rubio, Cruz, and Kasich remain. The nature of this candidate described above has created a resurgence of interest in the political process by those long disaffected, often those with little education, but not entirely. It’s been an ugly thing to watch through the last debate—and the candidates have on both sides—scheduled debate after debate.

On the Democratic side, Bernie Sanders’ campaign remains surprisingly strong. Although Secretary Hillary Clinton is in the lead with delegates, Sanders won a surprise victory in the labor-union, population-strong state of Michigan.

In our era, people travel everywhere all the time—people of means, that is. Even high school age kids can join “Junior Olympic” teams, should they be qualified, and compete all over the country. It’s an odd phenomenon and it affects deeply how people see and value education. Those in these elite fields must be home schooled or schooled on line—in the way of child movie stars earlier. Now they exist in the tens of thousands. Yes, sports is a huge economic driver in this era.

Just this morning I heard an interview with a woman sports reporter speaking about how she and her fellow women sports reporters stay safe on the road, being so often in the presence of male athletic-team driven passion. She notes that women sports reporters are shocked anew by what males yell at them while they are interviewing on the field, for instance. “It is much worse than it was 15 years ago.” Here in the 21st century we women continue to make gains: three women sit on the Supreme Court now; women lead many large corporations, but pay is not yet equitable, and we see—and have seen since Second Wave Feminism began in the late ‘50s to the early ‘70s (1950s-1970s). Crawfordsville has yet to elect a female mayor.

Since I’ve written too, Supreme Justice Antonin Scalia died suddenly a few weeks ago, leaving a 4-4 split in the Supreme Court between those who tend to be so-called conservative and those who are so-called liberal. The women’s rights case that the three women Supreme Court justices argued passionately for last week pitted the State of Texas’s desire to have all women’s health clinics equipped fully for treatment of even simple procedures. Congress and our country remain passionately divided about such issues though—and you in the 22nd century will know how this went—young people by far favor full rights for all people including gay and transgender people. Gay marriage now stands with male-female marriage as the law of our land.

Even though we listen to endless political news, perhaps what we should be thinking about and getting much more passionate about is global warming. It was heartening to hear this week during the State Dinner at the White House that President and Mrs. Obama held for new Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife, that the major issue on the agenda was global warming and sustainability. Here in Montgomery County, the weather report suggests noticeable warming. Across the country records for March were broken. We’re not even sure that the robins left our area this winter. While everyone is enjoying the 60 degree days, it’s unsettling to have daffodils showing buds and some bloom when in earlier years, a blizzard would have been much more common.

These past few weeks the stock market has rallied and had steady gains for four weeks now. Investors are watching China closely as that economy is slowing down and tending to pull world investors along with it. It is stabilized a bit just now and oil prices have climbed a bit causing investors to feel freer to buy. Oil, which sold for $150 a barrel just a couple of years ago, has been selling around $30 during the past several months. While drivers celebrate and go out and buy bigger cars and SUVs, this throws the global market into unknown instability, especially for the oil-producing nations. USA currently thinks it’s sitting in the catbird seat because of fracking (oil extraction from underground rock) but this method has lots of environmental consequences. Of all things, Oklahoma with its endless oilfields and fracking fields now has hundreds of earthquakes each year. The issues around oil continue to drive much in 2016. The Keystone Pipeline just now won’t be built, and the Paris Environmental Summit last fall did more than any earlier one has, but we are still in an era where we are burning, building, and developing. How long can our planet take the burgeoning population and the ignoring of sustainability?

Even though our policies as a nation don’t reflect the global problems with rising seas and warming temperatures, along with melting permafrost, our literature and film do. In Young Adult Literature (a new genre identified in the latter part of the 20th century), dystopias are very popular. Series like *The Hunger Games* and the *Divergent* have led the way. Oddly too, zombie and vampire literature have had a resurgence in the same time period led by the *Twilight* series. This year’s Academy Award nominated films included a few dark, futuristic films and the Blockbuster films tend to tilt that direction most of the time, featuring comic book heroes who fight in increasingly urbanized, technical environments made possible by CGI (computer-generated imagery) which resemble nothing so much as video games which have also gained in popularity and ferocity during the 35 years or so of their existence.

Three films-- “The Martian,” “Mad Max Fury Road,” and “The Revenant” (set with realistic detail though in a natural setting)--partake in this bleak look at the world’s direction. The winner of the Best Film 2015, though, was a brilliant, almost-documentary telling of the Boston Globe’s investigation of the pedophile scandal in the Catholic Church. Called “Spotlight,” the film follows the Spotlight investigative journalists who painstakingly put together a case against the systemic hiding of pedophilic priests by the Catholic Church. Winning the Best Actress Award was Brea Larsen whose astonishing portrait of a young mother imprisoned with her child in a garden shed by a kidnapper-rapist for seven years is remarkable in that it makes this a story of motherhood, of education, of resilience, and of families. That film Larsen starred in is “Room” and it is based on a novel of the same name by Emma Donoghue.

This Saturday morning too I would like to pause a moment to give you 22nd century reader a sense of how we in 2016 have come to drink our coffee. For much of the 20th century, America’s coffee was laughed it by any visitor from Latin America, Europe, or the Near East. Famous for our weak stream of perking coffee served up by Folger’s and the like, somehow the US hadn’t developed a coffee pleasure culture. Maybe our Puritan heritage had something to do with that? At any rate, that all changed with Starbuck’s, a little company out in Seattle in the l970s that decided to start a European-style coffee bar. Let’s just say they succeeded. Here in our little town we have had as many as five coffee shops offering up Joe with a kick. Currently we have three fine coffee shops: Espresso to Go, Brew Pub 1832 on the Wabash campus, and Joshua’s Cup, all of which serve up specialty coffee. Nowadays a third of all adults one sees these days, especially the younger ones, walk around with a cup of coffee in some kind of To Go container made of the latest plastic/metal/glass composites for sleekness and low environmental impact.

I save until last a look at our volatile world where trouble brews from Libya across to Yemen into Syria and beyond. China and the USA are posturing out in the China Sea.

Most touching and tormenting are all the migrants fleeing terror and war especially from Syria and from Afghanistan. As Europe has begun tightening its borders, the EU is virtually taking bribes from Turkey to house and keep many more refugees, even giving them Fast Track status to move toward EU membership. The situation is entirely dire. While the Scandinavian countries and especially German Chancellor Angela Merkel speaking for her country have been exceptional in their hospitality and their desire to welcome great numbers of migrants, those numbers—and a bit of violence domestically in both Sweden and Germany--have caused some pullback. At the same time, the Eastern European nations—those former Soviet Block countries—have been much more stringent about numbers from the beginning. Currently Greece is suffering most as tens of thousands of refugees cross the Mediterranean to come to Greece with the intention of moving farther north, but they are now trapped in Greece, sleeping in the open in these rainy, cold times of the year. PBS reported on Friday that last year 1,600 refugees arrived in Greece in January. This year it was over 67,000. This situation—heartbreaking and moving—is also going to determine a good deal of how we all move forward. As I noted above, the USA has been embarrassingly stingy about absorbing these particular refugees in contrast to our northern neighbor, Canada.

**April 15, 2016**

How many, many things, issues, and ideas wash through a community, a state and a nation during the simple course of a month! While we might say to an agitated child, a neighbor, or a friend, “Everything’s OK, nothing much is happening” that, in fact, would not be true.

Let’s look first back on an important meeting of the League of Women Voters of Mongomery County. In March of each year, LWV holds its County Observers Dinner and meeting. Our LWV is exceptionally vital to the public life of Montgomery County and has been since its earliest days in the first quarter of the 20th century. The League of Women Voters was founded at the time women got the vote in 1919. This in and of itself is a huge thing, but Montgomery County has a special tie to the history through one of the luminaries of the National Women’s Suffrage Movement, Zerelda Wallace who was General Lew Wallace’s stepmother. She was a major influence in his life and vital to the Movement. As Zerelda herself wrote, “I believe the great majority of American men love our free institutions; I believe they have hope and pride in the future of this nation; but as sure as you live, every argument you use against the enfranchisement of women deals a death-blow against the fundamental principle which lies at the base of our government….” We can only imagine how Zerelda Wallace would cheer to know that Hillary Clinton is currently a most viable candidate for the presidency of the United States.

Our LWV in 2016 is the largest in the state of Indiana (thanks in no small part to the leadership of Gail Pebworth, its most passionate champion). Many, many women hold leadership roles in the League here in the County, but Gail is the Queen Pin of all. The League of Women Voters’ mission is to support fair and open government available to all citizens and subscribes to no political agenda. This belief in citizen participation can be no better illustrated that in the LWV program of appointing members who volunteer to observe all (or many) government units, boards, and commissions in the county. On the night of the Observers Dinner, these observers present their reports. It is the public’s and the membership at large’s chance to learn a great deal about the operations of our county. This is one of the many precious gifts of “government for the people and by the people” that LWV offers up to Montgomery County. That night—March 17—the LWV Observer Corps presented reports on the county school boards, the Common Council, the Park and Recreation Board, the Lew Wallace Study Preservation Society, the Sewer District Board, the Utility Service Board (CEL&P), the County Commissioners, the County Council, the County Health Board, the Planning Commission, the Jail Bond Commission, and the Convention and Visitors Commission. Those of you in 2116 will see that this represents a lot of human hours invested in quality government in our county. At this meeting, members also received the League’s new Government Directory that will likely also be stored in this time capsule to give you a fuller sense of our civic life.

Education is always at the forefront of all communities’ interests and so it is here. I might note that at this point in time the national thrust, based on lots of ongoing scientific and pedagogical research, is toward Early Childhood Education, and recognizing the intrinsic value of deep education for our tiniest citizens. This means that national and state governments are pouring dollars into pre-school programs and that those programs, as best practice, are aimed at Inquiry-Based Learning, Social Justice Learning, and Active Learning. Recently research has firmly proven what our instincts had told us, and that is that children who are read to and talked to constantly from birth onward have tremendous advantages as learners when they come to school. Happily too in this era where within the last 20 years testing at all levels has come to dominate schools, taking away programs in the arts, PE, and music, we are now on the verge of a swing back toward these vital sorts of learning and joys that make for the most well-endowed, well-educated learners later on. One recent study shows that Playing should be the main mode of putting learning into practice until age eight. That turns lots of our recent test-all-the-time methods of the past 20 years on their heads. (Those of us in education say, “It’s about time.”)

You’ll want to know about technology in school too: technology is more and more integrated fully into students’ days. Most schools now have SmartBoards along with their old blackboards, and the best teachers immediately grasp or can be taught how to integrate imported internet resources into lessons without simply “showing things.” It will always be difficult to make sure that all teachers hold to this high standard.

In our era, especially here in Indiana, our state has conducted a (perhaps treacherous for students and taxpayers’ money) a rather extensive experiment in using public monies to fund charter schools (private schools led by private businesses). While some programs, namely schools started by Teach for America grads, like the KIPP Schools, have good reputations, charter schools have been much derided by public school advocates here in the state; and, indeed, statistics show that students as a whole in public schools outperform students as a whole in charter schools.

You 2216-ers will also be interested to know that another factor at this point in time is that Indiana has in recent years put shockingly low limits on property taxes: many of us have seen our taxes drop 5- or 10-fold. This has been a stressor on the schools and on other public services here in our state.

Speaking of legislative issues. It is in mid-late March when our Indiana Legislature ends its session. Our local Chamber of Commerce held its last Legislative Breakfast in early April in Detcheon Hall at Wabash College. One must be a committed citizen to attend as these meet at 8 a.m. All of our legislators were there from the state level; the county and the city were also represented: Senator Phil Boots, Representative Tim Brown, Representative Sharon Naegle; and, from the county, Phil Banes, Commissioner; and, Assistant to the Stellar Grant to Mayor Barton, Dale Petrie.

Each person spoke: Dr. Tim Brown (more or less chair of all things fiscal in the state at this point) spoke about HB1001, a transportation bill. It is important to note that currently Indiana, along with the entire country, is suffering from a dearth of funding and planning for vital infrastructure repair and revision. Representative Naegle spoke about veterans’ legislation, an important issue in this era of war that is mainly out of sight and mind—as this country has had a volunteer army for decades now. At the county level, Phil Bane spoke of a sewer project at Hwy 32, noting that the nexus of Hwy 74 and 32 should be an area for growth soon for our county. He also spoke of the extension of the Walmart Road, allowing a new entrance off of 200S. You will also wish to know that Walmart, a national franchise department store, now the world’s biggest retailer of its sort, has basically come in to occupy all mid-sized towns and all other cities in the United States. It offers low prices and people shop there. Fairness to employees and its effect on local businesses continue to be controversial issues.

Speaking of fairness issues, a triumph has been made in the completion of the courthouse project that now features an attractive parking lot, landscaping, and a graceful ramp for entrance by wheelchairs, and strollers, and other modes of non-two-feet modality. Bane noted that we have 835 miles of country roads in Montgomery County. Dale Petrie spoke of progress on city projects: Fire Station #2 is being rebuilt, Concord Road is being widened; the deed will transfer to the Ben Hur building and its renovation should start imminently; the Whitlock project will open by early summer; the Pocket Park is well into the design phase; and the Loop Trail will be completed in two phases. INDOT funding will let this trail loop to the train station in a couple of years.

After presentations, a good deal of time was left for questions. Local attorney, Elizabeth Justice stood, thanked the legislators for their service, and expressed dismay that two of our representatives (Brown, Boots) had supported a highly restrictive abortion bill that Governor Pence has just signed. This restrictive bill makes Indiana one of the three or four most restrictive states in the nation. Representative Brown spoke of care and hospital privilege, but this did not stop the audience from pursuing this issue, especially vital to women. In a follow up question about how professional women must have freedom over their own bodies, and that young millennials and professionals keep close track of a state’s track record on issues that are important to them, Representative Naegle spoke up to say that she agreed and that she and several other Pro-life (as it’s oddly called here in our century) Republican women had opposed this law, but were not heard.

In a related issue this month and last, other women from around Indiana and around the nation have responded to Governor Pence’s signing of this law by creating a campaign called Periods for Pence. The idea uses social media to spread the idea and women responding write to Governor Pence about their menstrual periods or other bodily issues of women based on the thought that if he is so interested in women’s bodies, he should get to hear some more information about them. This slightly naughty and wonderfully bold feminist campaign has received a good deal of national attention.

On the national front, one major event was the visit of President Obama to Cuba. Ever since the Cuban Revolution well over 50 years ago, the US and Cuba have had no formal relationship with one another. You students of history out there in 2116 will recall that Cuba was an important Communist state, especially in the earlier days of the Cold War and the US had a failed invasion to the Bay of Pigs; and that the world came close to nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis (1961) when Russia was shipping nuclear weapons to this island not 90 miles off the US shore. Throughout this entire period, President Fidel Castro has held control of the country until very recently when his brother Raoul has taken official charge and begun inviting renewed ties with the US. Although this is still controversial in some quarters, the doors are opening and now, for the first time in decades, Americans can travel to Cuba and they are flocking to do so. In a speech in Havana on March 22, 2016, President Obama urged our two countries to bury the Cold War hatchet, urging more trade, more freedom, and more opportunity for exchanges of all sorts.

Ironically, given that Cuba was once a puppet state of sorts of Communist Russia, in just this past week, Russia, who has been holding sort of proxy wars against the US and Europe in both the Ukraine and in Syria, used war game exercises to make faux attacks on a US destroyer in the Baltic Sea. This behavior was considered a most provocative act by the United States. As I write, the old Cold War enemies are, alas, pointed head to head again right now. We only hope history and sanity will prevail as these lethal games are played.

Peace talks have been tried and postponed over Syria during this past month. The war there makes more and more people homeless, destitute, and displaced. The migrant crisis continues to build in Europe, the greatest problem of this sort since World War II rocks the continent. Fences have now been built, migrants are being shipped back to Turkey from Greece. Syrians, Iraqis, Afghanis, many of them Muslims, are trying to adjust to their lives in Sweden and Germany. Even these most welcoming countries have seen backlashes, especially after some incidents involving women being harassed by immigrant men. People from these cultures are not accustomed to societies in which women are held to be equal to men.

And, on the political front. Now we have just five candidates for the two presidential nominations remaining in the field. Bernie Sanders has galvanized the young of this country by his first surprising and then long string of victories in Democratic primaries, especially in the West and Midwest. He and Hillary Clinton face off in New York next week. That state where she was senator for eight years, and a popular one at that, will be lively. To judge the popularity of Senator Sanders, one need only to look at the Wabash College campus where a Phon-a-Thon for Bernie is happening Saturday at the Malcolm X Institute. Two young people (a Twenty-Something and a Thirty-Something) who both come from conservative families and attend (or have) conservative churches are busily signing up recruits for this session, revealing how the young in this country are beginning to take charge….and doing it in ways that pollsters aren’t necessarily predicting based on demographics.

On the Republican side, Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, and John Kasich remain in the field. Mr. Trump has made considerably less offensive noise in recent weeks (his hair is even less orange than its been) while Ted Cruz tries to rally the non-Trump people to his Christian-right side. John Kasich quietly meets with state officials and town meetings asking for the support of those already holding mainstream Republican offices, trying to get enough votes so Trump won’t have a mandate going into the summer convention. The talking heads (political pundits on television) keep talking.

**May 6, 2016**

Earlier this week, Indiana held its primary election (on May 3). Because of the way that the contest for the national election has been playing out, Indiana—for the first time in many a decade—became pivotal at least to the Republican side of the competition. On that day, Montgomery County put into play for the very first time Voting Centers, replacing the traditional precincts. Rather than being required to go to a precinct located in proximity to one’s residence, the Voting Centers allows any registered voter to go to any one of five Vote Centers in the County. This is a major historic change that proceeded very smoothly. I was personally involved at one of the Vote Centers as a Media Observer and therefore had the privilege of seeing our living, breathing democratic society in lively action—in its 21st century style. The new system allows around 100 citizens to vote each hour. Side-by-side they (we) stand and put our choices into a computer that prints out a paper ballot that we placed into a vote counting machine. Each ballot is quadruple checked. A representative from the company in charge of setting up the machines (Montgomery County owns them) noted that this election was going as well as if we had done it four or more times.

This experience was a new one for most voters in Montgomery County, and not only because of the new technology. Because of the highly contested national election, and because Donald Trump, by winning Indiana, could nearly wrap up enough delegates to insure his candidacy at the Republican Convention; and, because of the wildly popular campaign being run by Bernie Sanders on the Democratic side, turnouts were unprecedented so people waited in line for as much as an hour here in our rural county. Indeed Indiana did prove pivotal. Within an hour of the polls being closed, Senator Ted Cruz suspended his campaign. On Wednesday John Kasich suspended his. Now the national, regional, and state press are alight with speculation about how mainline Republicans will handle this candidate who is said to have performed a “hostile takeover” of the Republican Party.

On the local front, long-time candidate Terry Hockersmith, and two newcomers, Gary Booth and Greg Morrison became the Republican candidates for county council. Ron Dickerson was a close runner up. John Frey won the nomination for County Commissioner. No Democrats were listed on the ballot for these two races. However, Bernie Sanders won Indiana’s vote for Democratic candidate, defeating Hillary Clinton 53-47 percent. It was a lively day in Montgomery County.

Our county is especially known for its numerous handsome and important museums. Our little city of 15,000 has the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum, the Carnegie Museum, and the Old Jail Museum right in town. Other small museums are in the county as is the thriving Athens Arts Gallery.

Out on the international scene, the torment that is Syria continues for its people after five years of fighting which has brought no resolution. Recent peace talks have again broken down. During the past month, President Obama has traveled to Saudi Arabia which is claiming to be remaking its economy to be less dependent on oil. The prices of oil, i.e. they are historically low, has meant devastation for oil-producing countries such as Saudia Arabia, Iran, Venezuela and Brazil. The situation in Brazil has the world’s spotlight just now especially because the Summer Olympics are scheduled to be held there. Not only is the government in turmoil, the economy in shambles, but also environmental degradation has many wondering how events, especially water-based ones, can possibly take place.

The disease scare of the year, the Zika virus, continues to spread northward bringing with it the threat of birth defects and other illnesses especially for children. The possible exposure to Zika has led some athletes from several different countries to withdraw from Olympic competition

**May 19, 2016**

Here in mid-May the national political scene has changed again—just as the democracy is set up to do: as summer approaches and the Democratic and Republican conventions with it, the candidate field narrows. Against expectations of the entire Republican establishment, Donald Trump is now the uncontested nominee for the Republican nomination. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders continue to duke it out despite many calls in the national press, especially among the intelligentsia, for Senator Sanders to desist. He has been winning popular votes in the state primaries and caucuses; she has the most delegates lined up. Sanders’ candidacy like Trump’s, is to a degree based on disgruntlement with how things have been going in the nation. While Trump’s followers tend to be unemployed, older workers, people who haven’t voted before; Sanders’ supporters are especially young people, the Millennials who want some major restructuring of the way Wall Street works in regard to the government, and some sort of recognition and action about the vast disparity in this country between the wealthy (“the 1%” as they are known) and the other 99%.

**June 3, 2016**

It’s approaching high summer here in the middle of the Midwest and people have been mowing their lawns for at least six weeks. Since the first centennial of our state, lawn care has become an insanely huge industry in America. We grow more grass than any food crop in this nation. People in 1916 would have been amazed to see all the lawn tractors, riding lawn mowers, and all the other paraphernalia ordinary people use to maintain their acres of grass and flowerbeds. A century ago, World War I was being fought. America was not yet in it but soon would be. In that different era, one of the main mottos was “Food Will Win the War” and everyone was encouraged to eat what they grew. All over this country schools grew great amounts of vegetables and students learned gardening. After World War II, during which Victory Gardens were encouraged, vegetable raising at home has plummeted just as food shipments and grocery store chains expanded. Currently here in 2016, our culture is in a phase of shifting at least a piece of the culture in the direction once again of growing and eating local, sustainable foods and giving at least some attention to the care of our soils. This is more vital than ever. During our current times, as the documentary film “Just Eat It” let us know, we in north America waste 40% of our food and 97% of that ends up in landfills—where it often creates methane gas, a powerful global warming gas. In the United States $218 billion is spent to produce food that is never eaten. These sobering statistics, this reality, that has come with a planet whose population has doubled in the last half century will continue to challenge forward thinking people in this next century.

Another huge environmental issue our era faces is that caused by the pollution created by the expanding and ever expanding automobile market, now especially strong in India and China. The only countries that have major biking commuter cities are The Netherlands and Denmark, countries which do not have auto industries. Bike commuting used to be common everywhere in this country: a beautiful wooden boulevard linked Pasadena to Los Angeles in 1900 and this remained well used and in place until after World War II when the highway and gasoline industries changed transportation models entirely. What will 2116 have done to improve transportation? (The book *Door to Door* provides some ideas.) We here in this century do wonder if you all will be crazed by gridlock and plagued by pollution. May you have found some solutions of which we cannot even dream.)

On the global scale, Puerto Rico, Canada, and Brazil have attracted the most American news coverage in the last month—sensation leads the way: in Puerto Rico the government is in debt and can’t repay its loans; the country is drowning in garbage because the trash and recycling industry are in disarray, and the island is currently a hotbed for the Zika virus. This appears to be another environmental insoluble. Up in Canada, near Ft. McMurray, a vast forest fire burned out of control for weeks. Brazil is set to host the Olympics in a few weeks. They too have some intractable pollution problems: they’ve just sacked their president, and also are the nexus of the Zika virus. Some athletes are not going to compete for fear of their own and their partners’ health.

As if these things weren’t enough to challenge the planet, our nation, and the state of Indiana, the world continues to face the most major refugee crisis in history not associated with war. Talk is going on to work toward different solutions than the current plan (which is a short-term solution) which houses people in tent cities. This is no longer viable. The largest refugee camp in the world is in Kenya where 360,000 people reside. There are reportedly 7 million refugees currently in the world.

On the national level recently, lots of political rhetoric has been tossed around about North Carolina’s so-called “Bathroom Law” which would prevent transgender people from choosing the bathroom of the gender with which they identify. President Obama’s staff member Loretta Lynch has spoken out in support of all peoples and the President himself has declared June, 2016 to be Pride Month in a simple statement supporting the rights of all Americans of all diverse sorts.

As these major issues roil, here in Crawfordsville we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Montgomery County Community Foundation that in its quarter century of existence has provided c. $17 million for local needs and enhancements. Begun at the urging of the Lily Foundation which encouraged all Indiana counties to being their own county-level foundations, the MCCF owes a great debt to the small group of people who caught the dream and made it a powerful reality.

Downtown on Saturdays our Farmers’ Market is busy and now a stable force in our community, attracting folks from the region both to sell and to buy. This is another thing that has developed and grown during the last 20 years. Friends of Sugar Creek have recently conducted their spring cleanup and are readying for a Family Friendly Float Trip soon. All the high schools have graduated the classes of 2016 as has Wabash College whose student-given speeches can be read on line. One of them this year was given by local student, Samuel Vaught.

**June 23, 2016**

Anyone connected to the wider world woke up on Sunday morning, June 12 to the horrific news that our country had suffered, in the early morning hours, the worst mass shooting in our history. Forty-nine individuals, dancing and relaxing in the “safe space” of a gay nightclub, were gunned down by a single individual toting an assault rifle.

Devastating in all human ways, but especially for what is already America’s most targeted minority, i.e. LGBTQ Latinos, this news has had the country reeling…though this doesn’t show in Congress where nothing has shifted in terms of any gun control legislation. Everything is frozen along party lines. Even though poll after poll shows that vast majorities of Americans favor some kinds of gun control, even as simple as required background checks, and/or not allowing people on No Fly lists not to buy weapons. The Second Amendment is pulled up as the crux of this battle. In fact it seems to be that once upon a time guns controlled the Wild West. Now here in the first decades of the 21st century the NRA controls the country’s representatives and senators. On the other side of the argument, others panic over the fact that this is somehow tied to “Islamic terrorism” even though it has been clear to see that this man, American-born, was perpetrating a hate crime and had bought the assault rifle legally even though he had been investigated twice by the FBI.

Those of you reading from the future would like to know too that this terrible crime happened almost exactly one year after Marriage Equality was declared legal by the Supreme Court. If your century is as different as ours is from the 20th century, this will be very old, antiquated news. This crime also happened during Pride Month which is a month that celebrates gay, trans-gendered and other queer peoples who within the last decade have gained much approval in American society, especially among younger citizens who, along with the star, writer, and director of the Tony-Award winning Broadway show “Hamilton,” Lin-Manuel Miranda, say, “Love is Love is Love is Love is Love.” Despite all this progress there have been all kinds of backlashes against these new ways. Our state government has been at the forefront of that. Yet this coming Saturday, June 25, Crawfordsville is holding a concert to benefit Orlando victims. This is something that would not have happened here just a few years ago. Many members of our community will be performing including Crawfordsville PRIDE, Dancing Raine Studio, Dance by Deborah, and the cast of the Vanity’s production of “Shrek the Musical.” Mayor Barton will speak. In a quote in the *Journal Review*, Mayor Barton said, “I am very proud of this particular effect.” Organizer Preston Dildine says that he also hopes the concert will open some doors of support for Montgomery County’s own LGBT community.”

These are difficult times overall. Last week in Great Britain, Member of Parliament Jill Cox, a tremendous young leader for the Labour Movement, a former human rights leader, and young mother (age 41) was gunned down in a town in her own district. She was an active supporter for Britain to remain in the European Union. Her assailant is reported to have neo-Nazi ties.

As the threat of terrorism hangs, especially over the Western world, things go hard for civilians especially in Iraq right now. This all makes life very difficult for our Muslim citizens who just now are celebrating their month of Ramadan (June5-July 5) under often trying and frightening circumstances.

Our local tragedies have continued to be around drugs, especially meth and heroin. A non-comprehensible piece of this has been the three teens who have committed suicide at North Montgomery High School this year. In response to this, The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention helped lead Crawfordsville’s first “Out of the Darkness Walk.” It’s all about education and awareness,” said Caroline Erdahl, an organizer. Here’s hoping that next installment will be more positive.

Now that the two presumptive party nominees for president are: Hillary Clinton (D) and Donald Trump (R), we can recognize two very unusual things. First and foremost, America has at last its first female candidate representing one of our two major parties!!!! In Donald Trump we have a most non-traditional candidate, a businessman who has no governmental experience and who specializes in marketing himself and his businesses. The idea that any presidential candidate in the United States is devoted at core to our democratic values does not seem part of this campaign, but we do have months to go. In contrast, Hillary Clinton has served as a Senator and as Secretary of State. As First Lady of President William Jefferson Clinton in the 1990s she was very active on behalf of women’s and children’s rights, and was a major advocate for expanded health care.

**July 3, 2016**

On June 23, citizens of the United Kingdom went to the polls to vote whether to stay in the European Union or not. This is a 43-year old alliance. I made no reference to this vote per se in earlier entries because, like most, I presumed Britain would remain to stay and the status quo would move forward. That didn’t happen. On June 23 the Brits voted to leave the European Union, a move known as BREXIT. This stunning vote has set economies and politics, especially in the UK, reeling. News reporters and analysts night after night debate what this will mean to England’s future and the world’s. Those who voted for leaving seem most concerned about anonymous leadership in control in Brussels (the seat of the EU) as well as concern with immigration into Britain. All over the UK demonstrations are being staged by outraged younger people and those who feel that many who voted to leave were given false promises by the leaders of the movement who have since resigned their posts. In the first days after this event, world stock markets plunged. Currently the worth of the British pound is down by 1/3. Working people in small industries have arguably been hurt by EU membership. Whether the vote is a sensible re-aligning of players in order to get the EU to do some necessary reforms or whether this marks a start of falling back into a rivalrous nation state model that dominated and, one could argue, perpetrated the two great world wars of the 20th century, is by no means clear at this early point. You in 2116 will know how this played out all too well.

Other unsettling news on the international front in these past two weeks involve terrible terrorist attacks both of which ISIS claims responsibility but it is still not clear that this comes from centralized leadership. One attack was on the airport in Istanbul (over 40 are dead) and another was on the Bangladesh city of Dakha where customers in a popular restaurant were taken hostage and then 20 of them, all foreigners, brutally massacred. These two attacks on “soft targets” are, of course, reminiscent of the attacks in Orlando, in San Bernadino, in Paris, and in various parts of Africa. Such attacks also are perpetrated in the warring states of Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. As an expert in foreign affairs commented over the weekend, “It is getting ever easier and cheaper to perpetrate violence of this sort and at the same time it is getting more expensive and more difficult to defend against such attacks.”

Another global event that affects all the world’s citizens here in the early 21st century is the arrival of new diseases. By the late 20th century those of us born in that century took for granted that most of the world’s long-intractable diseases had been eradicated or nearly so. The rise of immunizations had changed the world beginning in the late 19th century. But as smallpox, malaria, polio, rubella, tuberculosis, and others came under control thanks to tremendous progress in science, the natural world had begun launching others. Just in our 21st century so far we have been plagued by SARS, MIRS, Ebola, Zika, West Nile, bird flu, and dengue fever. Ironically some of these diseases have arisen because of overuse of antibiotics. New strains that elude our medicines are those such as multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. A popular book this year, *The Next Pandemic: On the Front* *Lines Against Humankind’s Gravest Dangers* (Khan and Patrick) outlines this situation.

On the more positive side of disease control, so called “Moonshot” cancer studies are under way. In his final State of the Union address in January, President Barack Obama echoed Vice President Joe Biden’s plea for a unified endeavor to cure cancer and announced the creation of a national cancer “moonshot” effort and made Biden the man “in charge of Mission Control.” This new initiative will take advantage of all citizens and their ideas via social media. It has as its goal to get the science, the data, and the research currently “trapped in silos”, i.e. known by those doing the research but not many others to come into closer reach of patients. “It’s not just about developing game-changing treatments—it’s about delivering them to those who need them,” Biden noted.

It is sadly true that these major clouds over the world have obscured local news, they and the national election hold hostage our attention all too often. Once we look under the radar, we see what life is like for us fortunate citizens in this country not racked by war. While many of us Americans lead hard lives, most of us can count on orderly days governed by excellent civil authorities. This is certainly the case here in Crawfordsville where we are busy thinking up names for our new pocket park, where we await the arrival of our first craft brew pub, where people do Fun Runs and receive grants for good works from our Montgomery County Community Foundation. One of our newest non-profits Halfway Home has just gotten a grant for an assistant director. This vital program, started by lawyer Sara Houston Dicks, is giving women fresh out of incarceration, a place to live and training to be able to enter the workplace and the community on a better footing. On Sunday afternoons we take our lawn chairs down to the Lane Place (where people lived in 1916 and which in 2016 is a museum) for the great and simple joy of hearing our civic band play and, on one occasion, our community chorus sing. Because of the Bicentennial, a couple of weeks ago they did a rousing concert of tunes by native Hoosier musicians. Currently at the IMA is a brilliant show entitled “19 Stars” featuring 19 Indiana artists, one to represent each star on the flag when Indiana entered as the 19th state in 1816.

This morning as I continue this writing, it is the Fourth of July. Unlike most years this day of national celebration finds Montgomery County bathed in fog with temperatures in the ‘60s. Our weathermen tell us that the clouds and thunderstorms of mid-day may clear in time for fireworks display this evening. We hope so. This is a long tradition in our community—to have a major fireworks show in Milligan Park—with music and speeches and bright bursts of light. In backyards around town the popping got started after yesterday’s rain.

Down at the Farmers’ Market this weekend, we found the first sweet corn and the first tomatoes of the summer, those harbingers of high summer in the Midwest. Everywhere lilies of all sorts are in bloom here in early July. They may be found in our country ditches (those feral tiger lilies of brilliant orange) or cultivated in our gardens. Also in full bloom are the hydrangeas and the cone flowers (echinacea), an original prairie plant. Goldfinches, catbirds, nuthatches, wrens, robins, and mourning doves find yards and places without chemical treatment welcoming. How many, many fewer of these creatures we have than Hoosiers in 1916 would have had. We hope that you in the 22nd century still have many, many birds and bees. Our plummeting bee population worldwide gives us another cause for concern. We know now that bees pollinate up to 2/3 of all food crops. The saying used to be “Thank a bee for every third bite of food you take.” Scientists are now realizing that this is more like 60% of our food that is reliant on pollination.

**August 7, 2016**

Our July here in Montgomery County had a blessed ordinariness (overall) to it, given national and international furor and tragedy—which sadly continued through July with other mass shootings and terrorist bombings. It was also the month for the Democratic and Republican Conventions where candidates for the fall elections were formally (and very differently) nominated. But first to our local news.

When one writes and thinks a bit for history, different items jump to the fore than might otherwise happen. For instance, Crawfordsville hired its second female fire fighter in July, a wonderful thing for equal opportunity and equal access to jobs often excluded from one gender. On the other side of the gender divide, today we have more male nurses and more male pre-school and elementary teachers than in the past as well. One hopes these things that would have been nearly unheard of a century ago will be unnoticed in another century. Downtown rocks during the summer months in 2016 with the wonderful First Friday programs, featuring music and lunch on the plaza. New businesses have reportedly been interesting and coming to our town for the very reason that our community is involved and “seen out walking on the streets” according to one new businessman.

A young graduate of the Montgomery County Leadership Academy has founded the Montgomery County Diversity Council. Christina Sharp has initiated this group especially to bring attention to Indiana’s native peoples during this year of the Bi-Centennial. As she notes that we are, after all, named “Indiana.” Also, we have features of the Garden of the Month and community blood drives, visits by the Food Finders truck from Lafayette, a regional food bank that provides food for needy people in a 16-county area. Lots of local churches, community organizations, and individuals provide volunteer help to pass out provisions of all sorts. Between 125-200 families and individuals are served with such help. In addition Montgomery County Free Clinic, the FISH pantry, and an array other services and programs works to meet the needs of those who need it.

July also means the Montgomery County Fair. For two joyous weeks our newspapers are filled with stories of kids showing all sorts of animals, from chickens and rabbits and cats and dogs (even fish and birds in the pet category) up to cattle, swine, llamas, and sheep.  4-H kids also demonstrate their expertise on subjects as varied as rocketry and scrap-booking, cake-decorating and veterinary science. Photography is always a popular category. Garden goods also abound. In this era, 4-H has become equally accessible to more urban youth even though in our county people still mourn the days of the fairs of yore: 40 or 50 years ago the fairs were bigger, always had carnivals with them, and involved a lot more adults in the community simply because the culture was then a far more rural one. Montgomery County is still a rural place but fewer people farm on bigger properties. School consolidation over the past half century and a bit more has followed this change in how we live. May you in 2116 still have the Montgomery County Fair to go to, a place where there is a large arena for animal shows, all kinds of buildings to house animals for observation and judging, and big 4-H buildings where garden crops, and crafts, and sewing stand in rows alongside canning projects, baked goods, woodworking, and geology collections. May hundreds of Montgomery County kids still know how to give that 4-H pledge: “I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living for my club, my community, my country and my world.”

Now the city is revving up for the 10th Annual Taste of Montgomery County to be held at the General Lew Wallace Study on August 27. The August 2 National Night Out brought scores and scores of families to Milligan Park where local agencies and law enforcement brought neighbors together to enjoy a night of free family fun while interacting with groups from all parts of Montgomery County civic life. Sparky the Fire Dog (a large costumed figure) visited the swimming pool where swimming was free.

The cultural, game-playing craze of the summer has become the biggest mobile game in history. “Pokemon Go,” released on July 6 has everyone astir, whether playing or not as it has set loads of people out to wander around their real-world neighborhood on the hunt for the “animated monsters made famous years ago by cartoons, video games and trading cards.” In this game, players look at their phones to see “an augmented reality: a live, direct or indirect, view of a physical, real-world environment with elements that are augmented by computer-generated sensory input such as sound video, graphics or GPS data.” Crowds even have been reported on the Wabash campus, at the Lew Wallace Study, and at various points in downtown Crawfordsville as people in flocks play the popular game. As reported by Christina Franks in the *Journal Review* of August 3, “Standing by PNC bank, Sue Lucas, president of Crawfordsville Main Street, watched as Pokemon Go players stopped what they were doing, looked up from on their phones and read a historical marker explaining Crawfordsville’s claim to fame as the city where the first basketball game in the state of Indiana was played.” ‘There they were,’ Lucas said, ‘teenagers encountering Crawfordsville history and walking away hopefully with a new appreciation of this city.’” Lucas said Pokemon Go has accomplished the very thing the Crawfordsville Main Street organization works to do—get people of all demographics to downtown Crawfordsville. “We are blessed with a relatively small downtown,” she said, ‘which is a good thing because you can encounter so many things in a short distance. I’m just very excited about what is going on because of this game.”

Our city at large, especially thanks to the Stellar projects giving a boost to some long term goals, has been working to update their Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that sets the vision for the planning area for the next 20 years. Also, because Crawfordsville completed such a plan in 2007, it included many of the ideas that the Stellar designation has made possible, so our far-reaching goals need to be updated. Planning and Community Development director, Brandi Allen notes that “the public will be heavily involved in the process of creating a new Comprehensive Plan. A public hearing is being planned to kick off the process and the entire community will be invited to give their input.”

On the healthcare front, ASI (Abilities Services, Inc.) has a new director and this agency, now serving Crawfordsville for over 45 years has been providing care and opportunity for disabled people and their families. ASI has added a very popular new service, music therapy. They are also creating a new Upcycling initiative called Creative Abundance. Creative Abundance will be taking items normally considered for trash or recycling and creating from them some useful or artistic new items. Our hospital network, Franciscan St. Elizabeth Health, is in the process of bringing a new cardiovascular department to Crawfordsville. This will provide new and needed services to our community.

Out in the world at large, things that get reported, at any rate, are far less salutary. Here is a capsule of less than a month’s terror-ridden news and that only from outside war-torn Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan which have experienced far worse mass killings in addition to the horrible sufferings of war. On Jun 29, suicide bombers attacked the Ataturk Istanbul International Airport killing 44 and injuring dozens more. On July 6, a black man was killed at a traffic pullover stop outside of St. Paul, Minnesota. On July 7, five police officers were assassinated and nine injured at a peaceful rally in Dallas. On July 14 in Nice France, on Bastille Day, a terrorist drove a truck at high speed into a celebration crowed and 84 died. On July 19, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, three police officers were gunned down and three wounded. The country and the world responds in several ways, including pledges to calm the waters. Here in Crawfordsville all of these world and national tragedies, in the phrasing of *The Paper of Montgomery County* spur outpouring throughout our community.” On July 18, John O. Marlowe reported that law enforcement here in the county have received many, many local people reaching out to Sheriff Mark Casteel and Chief of Police, Mike Norman, to express appreciation and support. “That makes officer morale really high. I can’t tell you how much we appreciate the support that we are getting,” said Chief Norman. For others, elsewhere (and surely more locally too) this becomes sign for fear and a desire to arm themselves and call for drastic measures….which brings us to the national political conventions.

On July 18-21, the Republicans held their convention in Cleveland. There they officially nominated—though with historic reluctance—their candidate with no political experience, Donald Trump, who named as his Vice Presidential running mate, Mike Pence, Governor of Indiana, a notably calm, friendly man who carries conservative values on his sleeve. According to myriad reports, as well as the speeches themselves, the convention was noteworthy for its absence of talk about agenda and thick with attacks upon the presumed nominee of the Democratic Party, Hillary Clinton. Trump supporters, nevertheless, are many and they speak of a real concern in this country: the lack of middle class security in this era when the rich and poor have divided in income dramatically. These Trump supporters tend to be white, male, and with less than a college education. [NOTE: The actual election statistics show this not to be such a clear cut constituency.] (Senator Bernie Sanders’ supporters of another political persuasion, but still with outrage at government’s stagnation, the rise of wealth and power referred to often as “Wall Street”, and the sense of powerlessness among the young, educated class.) Since the Convention, Trump has raised a good deal of money and in the days afterward was running neck-and-neck with Clinton according to polls.

On July 25-28, the Democrats held their convention in Philadelphia. There they officially nominated Hillary Clinton as their nominee, a historic occasion, indeed, as she is the first woman ever to be nominated for president by a major political party. Even though the national press treated this as expected, even a “coronation” since Clinton has been in public life for decades, it sent a thrill through girls and women everywhere as only we can imagine or quite feel. To have cracked a bit that Big Glass Ceiling was a deep, wide sense of equality. Furthermore, in steep contrast to Trump, Clinton has been First Lady, a Senator, and Secretary of State. Several of the speeches in this convention by report and in their content, dealt with issues of the family, those heart-of-life issues that politics “old-style” has often put on the back burner, especially in our country. Rather than building a Wall with Mexico, turning away all immigrants, or giving them deep background checks, or “making the country great again,” these mantras of Trump’s, the Democratic Convention spent a good deal of time speaking to the resilience of our democracy, showing that America is pretty great now, giving women and disabled people a place on the stage.

Two noteworthy appearances were unusual for a Democratic Convention, which, at least in our century and the last half of the 20th, have been known for emphasis on domestic policy. One speaker was a retired four-star Marine general backed with many other retired generals and admirals and also by 20-25 veterans of various ethnicities and genders. Another was the father of a slain soldier from 2004 in Afghanistan, a Muslin soldier. As I type, the Khan family and the father’s words still echo across the airways. He spoke boldly on Clinton’s behalf, noting her proven leadership and her exceptional work all around the world. He directly condemned Donald Trump as unqualified and dangerous. Nonetheless, there are many, many in this country who find Hillary Clinton “untrustworthy,” think she is “a liar” and so forth. Sloganeering and deep sexism is likely at the root of part of this, but it remains the fact that Clinton is not seen as the warm, trustworthy person her intimates find her to be.

Since the Democratic Convention, now about two weeks ago, the polls have begun to shift more in Clinton’s direction again, this largely due to deep disgruntlement by mainstream Republicans who find they cannot support Donald Trump who in daily “tweets” and interviews continues to show himself impulsive and neither deeply learned nor informed. More troubling still, his rallies are marred almost always with violent and vocal gender, racial, and class slurs, often advocating violence. Just in the last several days, the mainstream media has been asking publically if Donald Trump may be mentally unstable, mentally ill, or actually have some sort of dementia. This in the wake of his conflicting stories, shallow understanding of public affairs, and his blatant attack on the Gold Star Khan family.

**August 26, 2016**

Here on Women’s Equality Day in this document in which we think boldly about the wide sweep of history, it’s startling to realize that at the time of the Centennial here in 1916 that none of the women could vote. Even though in Wyoming, women had the vote in 1890 and other Western states followed, it was not until 1920 (August) that Women’s Suffrage became federal law. It is also good to remember that our local luminaries, among them Dr. Mary Holloway Wilhite (who chaired the organizing committee for the Women’s Suffrage Association of Montgomery County) and Zerelda Wallace (stepmother of General Lew Wallace), and many more worked tirelessly for this throughout the latter half of the 19th and the early 20th century. On this day, in particular, it is wonderful to realize that we have at last—and with little public fanfare about her gender— seen a major political party nominate a woman to be president of the United States.

The 2016 “Insane Campaign” goes forth even as I write here. The issues most capturing public and media attention this past week or so has been Clinton’s dealing with nations who donate to the Clinton Foundation when she was Secretary of State and the emails kept on her private server at the same time. While neither of these things seems to be revealing intentional damage, they provoke much drum-rolling here in campaign season. Also from Trump’s side, he seems to be shifting on his “export them all” position on illegal immigrants, leaning now in the direction of those opponents (especially Jeb Bush) he lambasted in the primaries. He still speaks of a Wall from the ocean to the gulf, i.e. from California to Florida, but polls show him still slipping in key battleground states.

The attention of the world, for better or for worse, was directed from August 5-21 to the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Even though talk ahead of the Games focused on Brazil’s troubled government, its crime, and, especially, its polluted waters, once the games began, focus—at least on American television venues—was aimed at the competitions themselves. Russia was banned from competing in track and field because of doping charges and this created an international ruckus of sorts though mostly just from Russia’s own megaphone, claiming Western interference. The American athletes took home an outsized number of medals and the main story of these Olympics has to have been the remarkable number of women of color who won medals in swimming, gymnastics, and track and field. It was, though, Katie Ledecky, a white swimmer, who got on the front pages, rivaling Michael Phelps’ historic third Olympic gold haul. On Women’s Equality Day that should be noted, especially when little over a half century ago, much of America was swimming in segregated swimming pools, and so forth. The scandal of the games centered on American swimming too when another swimmer Ryan Lachte led a younger group of fellow swimmers on a night on the town, a drunken carouse, through Rio. Not good in and of itself, but no one would have known except they did damage to a restroom and committed other minor mischief and then claimed they’d been robbed at gunpoint to hide their activities (under the guise of “Americans Do Right and a Third World Country Is Corrupt” stereotype). It is important to report that as I write, it seems that this will, indeed, ruin this man’s career. All of his major sponsors have withdrawn their support.

On the entertainment front here locally, a week ago this evening, August 19, brought a historic moment in Crawfordsville history alive when the new “Ben Hur” film opened at the local theatre. Those people celebrating the first Centennial here in town would be glad to see that something that loomed very, very large in their lives, is still recognized in ours. For the Centennial, local folks performed pageants based on *Ben Hur* and others of Lew Wallace’s works. While this film isn’t garnering good reviews on the national level, the full-house who came to hear Lew Wallace Study director, Larry Paarlberg, speak before the film, not only enjoyed the film with its grandiloquent themes, they also enjoyed learning about the place the novel *Ben Hur* had played in late 19th century life, “allowing for the first time Protestant peoples to enjoy going to plays and film” which their religions had prior to this “Christ-centered” story been looked down upon. The story was well told and does focus on character, not just on dynamic battles, though those are brilliantly rendered with our latest 21st century technology. The Christian themes were not especially apparent until the very end and were woven well into this tale of the Roman Empire. Morgan Freeman, a major star of this era, played a wise man who knew horses. Though, as Paarlberg noted, this film plot doesn’t follow the book—really in any way. It does, though, give pride-of-place to the relationship of the alienated “brothers,” Messala and Judah Ben Hur. As for me personally, I much enjoyed the role played by horses—and not just in the chariot race itself.

Wednesday, August 24, in the mid-afternoon, storms came roaring into Montgomery County bringing with them two EF-1 tornadoes. In this era that “news” put us on national news. Even the BBC had coverage. Fortunately there was no loss of life in our county, just minor injury as the tornadoes flattened crops, tore away barns and created a wide band of debris and lost trees and property. Gary Anderson, near Mace, for instance, lost three of his four barns to the storm and had widespread property damage as did many residents of the tiny towns of Mace and Linnsburg. The storm tore on east and did urban damage in Kokomo and in the Indianapolis area as well. This storm brought Indiana Governor, Mike Pence, back to Indiana from the campaign trail.

**September 27, 2016**

Less than 24 hours ago, America was poised on its couches and in bars for watching the first Presidential debate between Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and Republican Candidate Donald Trump. This incongruous match between one of America’s smartest, most practiced, and most experienced politicians and debaters and a rogue candidate for President (whose candidacy has been opposed heartily by his own party and now by the five living former Presidents who come from both parties) proved to be predictable in that she talked policy and he talked generalities. Endless commentaries flood the internet today and the one scientific poll taken shows her the clear winner, but this year is so rogue its difficult to predict if quality and adeptness will triumph. There is an incredible amount of sexism involved in this election, much of it going unrealized I do believe. To see how this works, one only need to imagine how it would have been received if the woman had interrupted the man last night repeating again and again “Wrong, Wrong.” Let us hope that sanity prevails over this overheated urgency for change.

Here in Montgomery County we’ve just celebrated in honor of the state’s Bicentennial, our first All-In Block Party, the Harvest Hoopla during which over 40 booths were set up in the new Pocket Park (Pike Place) right beside the Farmers’ Market. Hundreds and hundreds of people came to see and to learn about Montgomery County’s history and sample the wonderful food. Recently a new Wabash College faculty member declared the Farmers’ Market and the Hoopla “the best things about Crawfordsville!” All of us have just had news too that some of our farmers from the Market are getting together to open a store in downtown Crawfordsville called “Four Seasons Market” with meats, preserves, baked goods, and more so we can have local food throughout the winter. This is a wonderful gain in this era of turning back from 70 years of processed and industrialized foods toward more sustainable and local food for the health of our bodies and the health of our local economies. Those folks in 1916 would hardly understand what I’m saying as industrialized food was just then getting its tiniest foothold. May those of you reading this in the 22nd century still have access to “real food” as we call it, food that is locally grown by natural means and sold locally.

Meanwhile overseas a fragile cease-fire agreement for Syria worked on so carefully by the US and Russia collapsed within a week of its creation. The situation there grows ever more dire. North Korea keeps testing nuclear warheads and shooting them into the sea. It’s a most dangerous time in the international world what with the immigration crisis in Europe and China’s aggressions into international waters and developing all sorts of bastions in Africa. It seems entirely the time to move cautiously with our foreign policy.

We shall see.

Meanwhile our nation is enjoying a time of celebrating the Obama family in their last few months in the White House. This administration has been entirely without scandal, something almost entirely unheard of, and more and more studies are looking favorably about accomplishments made during this era that began under the cloud of the Great Recession of 2008-09.

Wabash College is back in session and is still forging forth as one of only two male colleges in the nation. It has recently been ranked very highly by more than one national rating system, both for its academic programs and for relationships between faculty and students.

**October 12, 2016**

This writer has been away from her writing desk for a while (having taken an Amtrak train down to Santa Fe, New Mexico, a 24-hour jaunt from Galesburg, Illinois) and during that 10 days all hell has broken loose on the national campaign front, especially during this past weekend. While the election to our glum surprise was considered “almost tied” when I last wrote, Hillary Clinton began gaining ground after the first presidential “debate.” (Now if someone could read this from the first centennial year of 1916, they would well know what a debate is: it is a well-defined—by the classical Greeks, no less—method of argument using critical analysis and factual evidence in support of one’s arguments. Over the centuries it has been formalized into its recognizable form. Beginning in the 18th century, it has been known as Oxford-style debate, an honored, well known, and practiced form of discourse across the British realm and the American one.) This clear, easily judged format for arguing, has gone by the wayside in our politics these last couple of decades. So, when we today say debate, it refers to the fact that both candidates are on the same platform and each has a set time to speak, but beyond that there is nothing debate-like about it. In our current situation, Secretary Clinton tends to give well structured answers adhering to the format of formal argument presentation. Mr. Trump does not. He uses the platform to make broad claims and attack his opponent. Once the first debate had taken place, the “swing states” began to favor Clinton, presumably because of her more elegant performance in the debate. Then came last weekend….

On October 7, a tape was released of Mr. Trump speaking (a few years prior) on a bus to a male television interviewer. They were doing a job, approaching a taping studio where Trump was to make a guest appearance on a soap opera (“Days of Our Lives”). Neither man knew he was being recorded and what passed between them had to do with describing women in very lewd and predatory ways. There was talk of how to get women “to sleep with you,” and much more indelicate commentary than that which referred literally to groping women between the legs. Also on tape was the footage of both men leaving the bus and being greeted by the television actress who was meeting them. They had had their say about her too—lots about her legs. Of course this young woman was entirely unaware of the inappropriate and predatory talk that had passed between the men before they greeted her. For women, this is perhaps the most creepy part of the revelation. Not only were the men speaking of sexual assault on the bus, something Mr. Trump insists on calling “locker room talk,” but then got off and behaved more or less normally—though she was asked right away “for a hug for Mr. Trump.” I devote a paragraph to this because it reveals so much about a man that most have mistrusted but many have defended—until now. While the “hardcore” supporters speak as if nothing is out of the ordinary here—men will be men--, most of the nation is horrified and ashamed and embarrassed. Scores of leading Republicans have now disassociated themselves from the Trump campaign and women, in numbers, are declaring they are not, at least for this year, Republicans. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, is in a terrible quandary, but he made what must have been the best ethical deal he could cut with himself as head of the Party and has told all Republicans they are “free to do what they wish” about supporting Trump and that he will not himself appear with Mr. Trump nor campaign for him. Clinton, at this moment, is assumed to have an 88% chance of winning.

The second Presidential “debate” occurred after this had broken, last Sunday evening, October 9. It was in the format of a town hall meeting, a chance for ordinary citizens to be able to ask questions of the candidates. It was again an occasion of national embarrassment. While Secretary Clinton held on to her dignity against attacks such as “put you in jail” and you have an “evil heart,” and the fact that Trump brought four women accusers of Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton’s husband, to the town hall meeting to try to create a “Media Event” from it, Trump paced around stage—sometimes nearly stalking her—and even when a citizen asked a question, Mr. Trump would not speak directly to the person nor answer his/her question. It was another debacle. It’s a bit sad and maybe expected of us human beings that America has been a bit all too consumed with this circus and maybe doesn’t want it to end.

Tomorrow in Crawfordsville, the State Bicentennial Torch will come through! Even Lew Wallace will be one of the 20 carriers! A re-enactor portraying the great General-Ambassador-Territorial Governor will cross the Lew Wallace Study grounds. Others will carry the torch through downtown Crawfordsville and across the Wabash College campus as part of the Torch’s statewide tour across Indiana.

Much else concerns our world besides these ceremonial political events. In a year of a presidential election, the country talks a good deal about “the economy” and indeed that has been happening, but rarely do we get solid discussion by those who know. It’s more often like middle school kids yelling simple ideas at each other. Today on the Diane Rehm Show on NPR, however, several economists from various points of view discussed how this nation is doing and how it can and cannot grow in the future. The take away vital piece of information or two…had to deal with the simple fact that our economy grew so fast from 1945-2007 that those living within that time span, saw the GNP and their standard of living double in their lifetimes. In our current information economy, that is no longer possible. A 2% growth which we now have will be about the best things can be. “Growth” in this coming century will not be based on creating more things. (As a commentator from the Smithsonian Museum remarked in a story about consumer goods from the Revolutionary War era until now said recently, “Every person now living in the first world has way more goods than he or she can possible use or consume.”) The service economy of the last 30 years is now giving way to the information economy. To make any growth possible, we know we need to rebuild our infrastructure of railroads, highways, and airports, and we know we need to do better with our education system: the economists on Diane Rehm this morning noted that were we simply to improve our education system enough to match Canada’s, we would have a trillion more dollars in our economy.

It is also worth noting that the two presidential contenders disagree entirely about how to stimulate and improve the economy: Trump would cut taxes on the wealthiest (and everyone else too for that matter), leaving the federal coffers mysteriously to fill themselves, I guess. Clinton would tax the wealthiest citizens more. Their portion of taxes paid has shrunk mightily during the last 50-60 years and most believe that needs to be rectified. Nonetheless, that wouldn’t necessarily affect growth that much, but would set our education (perhaps) on a better path and would give us a chance to repair our infrastructure.

Other issues trouble us mightily in this era as well. While maternal deaths and deaths during pregnancy has steadily declined around the world, especially in the developed world, in America this has sadly been far from true. Between 2007 and 2015, both deaths during pregnancy and deaths after birth have increased, especially in sections of our country where health care for women has decreased in recent years. Here in our county, for instance, we had c. 15 or 20 years ago, a Planned Parenthood office. Now there is just one in Lafayette. Current governor Mike Pence has worked to close down Planned Parenthood offices that have been blasphemed as being “abortion centers.” While they do perform abortions as part of women’s health, PP has brought health care of all sorts, especially reproductive health care, to an entire generation of women and statistics for teen pregnancy and other signs of health went in the right direction when we had a strong and viable women’s health network. Indiana, I’m sad to report, currently has one of the poorest records of women’s health in the nation.

On a lighter note, television which holds still a powerful place in American life but not nearly what it did in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s when it was the only personal media game in town, is still a major force in American culture, and I want to bring to note something powerful happening on a new sit-com (situation comedy) this fall. The show is on ABC and is called “Speechless.” Its star character is a 16-year-old boy with cerebral palsy. The comedy is about daily life for him and his family, in school, in the neighborhood, and in the town where they live. In our era where our youngest adult population, the so-called Millennials, are especially keen to erase biases and empower marginalized groups, this is a wonderful addition. There is also a television show called “Transparent” about a transgender-parent and how life works in that family. Both of these dramatically normalize groups that had been left on the margins.

I suspect that nearly every woman in this country—at least in her heart—is glad that our half-the-population “marginalized” group will, in some major way, be set free by the national exposure given to exploitation and sexual assault against women brought to light by the aforementioned Trump tape.

Out in North Dakota, for a couple of months now, tribal peoples have been demonstrating at the site of the North Dakota segment of an oil pipeline (the Dakota Access Pipeline). The “national election circus” has been swamping attention and distracting us from this major movement to save holy ground and sacred spaces from development. The developers have a different scenario to report and even though the federal government has called halt on their portions of the pipeline, private builders were said to have restarted work earlier this week.

**October 19, 2016**

Last Thursday morning, the Indiana Bicentennial Torch Relay came to Crawfordsville. In our 21st century way, this was a big deal for our community. I can’t help but realize, though, that 100 years ago, virtually the whole town would have turned out for such an event. It would have been a county holiday! Crowds did gather, of course, and oh what fun it was to have East Main Street in front of the courthouse filled with every one of the county’s fourth graders who had come to be present in this year when they study Indiana history, and to sing in chorus “Back Home Again in Indiana.” It was the one chilly morning in October and so some of the little historians were shivering in their shorts and t-shirts. On the courthouse steps and beside it, older youth were readying to perform. Scurrying around in a golf cart was Heather Shirk and town leaders like Tim McCormick, Kat Burkhart, Mike Barton, Steve Frees and Scott Bowling were on the scene testing mikes, passing out foam torches to all the fourth graders, and chatting with the fireman on the big ladder truck that also was parked on East Main just to the west of the courthouse.

Crowds built by 8:45 a.m. and right at 9, the Southmont Band struck up a lively march, the black plumes of their band hats gleaming in the morning light. At the bottom of the courthouse stairs, the county-wide PRIDE team began pumping their hands up into the air. This excites the fourth graders who are seated on the street, most of them underclad on this first nippy day. The Pride leader begins, “Clap! Clap! Clap It Up” and his fellow PRIDE members and all the fourth graders join him. Soon we’ll hear from the Mayor and Aaron Morgan will introduce our 19 Honorary Torch bearers who are now coming out at the top of the courtyard stairs, all lined up in their bright yellow torch windbreakers. Only William Bratton and General Lew Wallace are dressed in clothing from their historical Indiana time. Both of these historic gentlemen are being re-enacted by local men who are “professional” Re-Enactors. Both stand at attention in their own historic uniforms and hats. Jim Amidon from Wabash College, buzzes by, clad in a Wabash jacket. A gigantic camera hangs from his neck. Tim MCormick is taking photos from the courthouse grandstand. Peering out of the tall south side windows, workers in the courthouse watch the activities, their jobs forgotten for a few minutes to watch the pageantry.

The Joshua’s Cup coffee shop behind me is doing booming business here across from the courthouse. The woman behind me sips a hot drink from her mittened hand. “Oh, it’s so good,” she notes about her maple chai, noting that this is the very first time she’s tried the coffee shop. Very elderly folks are in the crowd, approaching with walkers and a couple of wheelchairs. Also in wheeled vehicles are the new babies, at least two of them, both bundled up in fancy buggies. Their wooly caps peep out above a stack of blankets.

To keep warm, the fourth graders do a little whacking of one another with their foam torches. A new PRIDE leader stands up and says, “Give me an I….” all the way through until he says, “What’s that spell?” INDIANA!” A few minutes later he leads the fourth graders to spell HOOSIERS! too. The band continues playing lively marches evoking the past. I’m delighted to see the special education fourth graders arrive from one of the schools with their teachers and all their mobility devices. They too are all clad in golden Crossroads of America t-shirts to acclaim the day.

The rest of the program went off without a hitch with the Pledge of Allegiance being led by Fourth Grade History Essay Winners, the singing of the “Star Spangled Banner,” and more and more songs from the fourth graders (“Back Home Again in Indiana,” “On the Banks of the Wabash” and more). In the end all the bands played with everyone singing along to “God Bless America” followed by closing remarks by Mayor Barton who then got on that fire truck and lead the torchbearers down Main Street where each ran, biked, walked, or rode a “Rat Rod” for the length of his or her portion of the Torch route through Crawfordsville.

**November 25, 2016**

Here it is, the day after Thanksgiving and one month before Christmas, and over a month since I have written a Time Capsule “Pulse of the Times” entry. All through the year I’ve written in approximate two-week intervals, and now this…Of course the plan had been to write immediately after our national election on November 8. But, contrary to all national polls and because of a perfect storm of other factors, that election went in a direction no other national election in this country has gone, at least for a couple of hundred years. The morning of the election, major polls gave Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate, about an 80% chance of winning the election. In the final weeks of campaigning, a simplistic national barrage of sloganeering held sway: “Lock her up!” (because of concern about Clinton’s private e-mail server) and “We can’t elect a misogynist, racist, sexual predator” (because of Trump’s “Access Hollywood” video and his general campaign rhetoric).

As a member of League of Women Voters here in Montgomery County, I signed on to be a Media Observer at one of our Vote Centers, the one at Whitesville Christian Church in the south part of the county. Working the polls, a great American custom, treasured by generations of members of both major political parties, was in full swing that day. In this era, all workers are trained to help voters use the computer-based voting machines which spit out an actual ballot that is placed by the voter into a locked container. In typical form, Republicans and Democrats were working quietly and warmly together, all committed to this precious democratic process. At this rural post, voting was steady but not heavy at any point: no voter had to wait more than 15 minutes. Signs for candidates of each party were lined up the required distance from the Vote Center and 100s of voters streamed through without any issues. A problem with a computer was resolved without voters even knowing, and officials from the courthouse came immediately on scene when phoned in by the lead worker, Sally Evans, a Republican. Most of the voters were working people. I estimated that of the c. 600 voters I saw pass by in my c. 6-7 hours of observation, about one of every 200 looked dressed up to work in an office. Our voters were factory workers and people who run heavy machinery and the like. As was the national trend, many, many of these were first time voters (no matter what their ages), evidently fired up to have a national change. All day, given the expectations based on national stories and polls, I thought I was watching a pocket of ultra-conservative voting that would be a tiny minority in the national picture. Boy, was I wrong and, boy, were the national polls and commentators wrong.

In the end, Republicans won the presidency (though by narrow margins) all across the country. Only the northeastern states, the western states, and the state of Minnesota carried Democratic votes to the Electoral College. As I write, counting is still going on in populous California and, despite Donald Trump’s sizeable win in the Electoral College, Hillary Clinton is leading in the popular voting by almost three million votes. Given the way the country’s population is divided, an Electoral College vote from, say, Wyoming, represents just over 100,000 people. In California, that vote stands in for over a million people. Given this disparity and given the fact that this now is the second time in 16 years that the presidency has gone to the candidate who HASN’T won the popular vote, there is much furor surrounding the value, purpose, and misdirection of the Electoral College, the purpose of which at the nation’s founding was reasonable. Such changes, though, are for the future to decide.

Meanwhile, Americans now have a president-elect who has had no political experience and who has seemingly not exhibited throughout his long business career any sense of what it means to serve the public good. For instance, he has not released his taxes and continues to refuse to do so even though all other presidents have done this without thought for decades. The other day, President Obama referred to our government programs as ways to “file down the rough edges of capitalism.” He and Secretary Clinton have both spoken in very statesman-like ways about approaching this coming administration “with an open mind,” undergirding strongly the tradition of the peaceful passing of power.

Alas, even in these three short weeks since the election, the nation has seen strong appeals to the majority Democratic voting base, to oppose several of Trump’s suggested appointees. Our former governor, Mike Pence, will be Vice President come January 20, and, with his extensive (though controversial) government experience, he is having a major say in these picks and direction. Just in the past couple of days we have seen the appointment of the first women to this new administration which, before then, had been staffed by “rich, white men.” Haley Barber and Betsy DeVos have been named as Ambassador to the UN and Secretary of Education, respectively. Main concerns by critics circle around failure to recognize climate change and failure to protect the rights of our diverse citizenry. Rights of Muslin citizens, LGBTQ people, women, and undocumented people are now seen to be at risk. On the ground here at Wabash College, we have many reports of fear and outbreaks of hate crimes against women, Hispanics, and other forms of racism. People in our era see this as harkening back to the 1930s when waves of ultra-nationalism rose to power (and eventually to world war). It’s an unsettled time.

The Southern Poverty Law Center notes that they have had 700 reports of incidents in Indiana alone since the election. One of the most prominent happened at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Beanblossom, Indiana, near Bloomington. The church was graffittied with “Heil Trump” and other vicious labels, more characteristic of a time a century ago, long before the Civil Rights Movement. Here in Crawfordsville, we had an issue in a fourth grade class where students told their Hispanic classmates that they were going to be “sent back.” An incident of this sort caught national attention when it was caught on video in a Minnesota middle school. Communities are working hard to snuff out such behaviors, as Republicans and Democrats alike in cities and towns like Crawfordsville find them repugnant and un-American. Nonetheless, the campaign of this man who felt no hesitation in spewing hate and mockery at disabled people, Muslims, Mexicans, and women, has released some dark ugliness into our daily lives. Jews too have been attacked (graffiti on tombstones, for instance) with hate speech.

The weekend after the election, the nationally famous Monon Bell Game took place at Wabash College. For seven years Wabash had held on to the bell. This time, though, was Depauw’s turn and Depauw won the game. Most of us, though, were riveted by a less savory aspect that echoed and played off of the political campaign, an incident that surfaced as part of this game. A Wabash student was photographed wearing a hoodie that said on the back, “Grab’em by the Pussy.” (This is the offensive phrase Donald Trump used, among others, during the “Access Hollywood video.) In a reflective letter posted on Facebook, one of our citizens, a teacher in the local schools, who is by nature a quiet person, spoke out, asking us all to think of what it means that a group of young men, got the idea, designed the shirt, planned the shirt, and ordered the shirt. In a word, there were several times along this chain that their decency and common sense could have kicked in to stop that onrush of misogynistic imagery based on an exact Donald Trump quotation. A Depauw t-shirt was also photographed. On it was a photo of Donald Trump and under the photo it said, “Wabash: grabbing high school pussy since 1832.” Now, these might seem equally harmful, and in a sense they are, but this also perpetrates an old trope between Wabash and Depauw, suggesting that Wabash, that all-male institution, is stronger, bigger, more true as a college because it doesn’t have women students “to dilute the pool.”

Given this uneasy atmosphere created by the non-popular-vote election of a man who has already said that he “wants to divide his time between New York and Washington,” and whose family is evidently not planning to move to the White House, we have an era of unknowns facing us on many fronts. Given the demographics of our country, many of us thought that this campaign (odd and repugnant to moderate and mainline Republicans from the outset) was the last hegemony of the rich, old, white man in American politics. But this proves not true. We still have a presidential term to watch unfold, that we all, Republicans and Democrats alike, watch with trepidation. Now that he has attained this seat of power, many mainline Republicans, like Paul Ryan, and even Mitt Romney, are gathering around Trump, not so much to curry favor, one thinks, but to make sure that this tremendous domination of one party in the House, the Senate, and the White House (greatest since before the Great Depression) does not do irreparable damage to our two-party system, and to the operation of our democratic system in general.

Meanwhile on the local and regional fronts, we see activity to counterbalance: organizations are going out of their way to create events and situations where those who feel threatened and concerned are allowed to see that they have community allies and advocates.

This will be on display in Downtown Crawfordsville at Downtown Party Night tomorrow evening where a group of citizens (Humans for Humanity) is sponsoring a friendship activity for children. The kids will be making friendship “bracelets” by stringing beads onto safety pins, the new sign for folks to visibly wear so a person can see there are allies all around. One group I haven’t mentioned that has significant worry based on 20th century history, are the Jews. As leading Jewish intellectual Jeffrey Birnbaum notes, “If Trump creates a registry for Muslims, I a proud Jew will be the first to register as a Muslim.”) Mayor Barton has announced the re-energizing of the city’s Human Right’s Commission and he has appointed Ethan Hollander, who ran on the Democratic ticket, for a city council seat, as chair. “I went out on a limb there,” said Mayor Barton whose clear-eyed vision for the best interests of his city and the region are still highly visible. A week ago today he spoke at a Wabash College forum about city-college ties in this new era, and prominently featured the Human Rights Commission in his remarks.

Earlier that week, Wabash College had called a special Tuesday Chapel (Chapels typically happen on Thursdays.) This was an emergency chapel prompted by concerns for our students of color, of faiths other than Christianity, and of gay students. It especially was called because of the nasty “Grab ‘Em by the Pussy” sweatshirt that I described above. In that Chapel Talk, Professor Ann Taylor gave one of the more remarkable speeches I’ve heard declaimed from that august stage. She spoke of how equitably she had been treated as a woman scholar when she arrived at Wabash. She spoke of the delight of egalitarian treatment as a woman scholar/scientist when there were few on campus. Then she segued to an experience of molestation she had experienced in her early high school years; she spoke of working with her son Henry on Boy Scout projects; she set forth a template reminding Wabash men what they had most to take pride in. Upon the stage with her were President Gregory Hess, and presidents of the Student Senate and the Sphinx Club. Those of you reading this in the far future will know how this “came out” as it were. How did America handle having a president of gross and shallow character? How did this community and others respond in ways that kept their own communities strong, resilient, and moving forward amid such strife?

I should note also that there are many, many active women’s organizations newly forming and newly energized in the wake of this national decision. For so many of us, it can feel like 40 years of invaluable pressing forward toward women’s equality in the workplace, especially, has been wiped out in this tsunami of declaring for white privilege and a desire for jobs. Obama’s administration during the past 89+ weeks has been characterized by job growth, and yet Trump’s campaign appealed to those who have been forgotten, the old manufacturing class, that old group whose livings happened by the toil of hands, that group that Trump says he will bring jobs back for. It is altogether unclear how this can happen in that so many jobs have been replaced by technology, by globalization, and by the shift from the manufacturing, to the service, and now to the digital economy.

In all truth, people of the future, we have no idea of where the vast majority of people who voted for Trump will be able to find solid ways to earn livings in the decades to come. Many of us are also baffled because even though week after week job numbers in the country have significantly improved, no one talks about that. But, when Donald Trump makes a public splash (via tweets) to save a few hundred jobs at the Carrier Company here in Indiana, people claim this as a major achievement.

This past Saturday our Mayor Barton did our community proud as he typically does by appearing on a panel of speakers representing Rural Communities and their dilemmas and their work toward environmental improvement here in the state. This meeting took place at the 9th annual Hoosier Environmental Conference which was held in Boone County at the Fairgrounds on November 19. Barton spoke of the value of our state-leading solar park, of our train service, and of other projects that are woven into the Stellar Grant project. Since most environmentalists tend to belong to the Democratic Party (at least in this era), at one point Mayor Barton asked, “How many of you here know that I’m a Republican?” Barton’s work for the public good with his strong emphasis on what the next generation, those under 40, want from a community, was on display here and was well received. At conference’s end, we found it slow to exit the building, partly because so many wanted to pause for a word with and to shake hands with “our rock-star mayor” who is especially notable because he looks pragmatically and clear-eyed at issues. Mayor Barton is a most refreshing change from those politicians whose rabid political loyalties too often define how people are behaving just now in the country.

In this three weeks since the election, our community has been rocked by a tragedy in the form of a mother killing her two young children, the burning down of an important city building with road maintenance equipment in it, the donation of an NFL grant to our sheriff’s department to get a new K-9, and the usual rich, day-by-day activities that characterize a vibrant town no matter what the season or the political climate. On the national news, the most troubling event happening is surely the Stand Off at Standing Rock where the Sioux Nation and their allies are fighting to protect their ancestral land against the interests of the oil pipeline. These election results do not bode well for this effort. (NOTE: As of February, the native peoples have won their battle to make sure that the Dakota Access Pipeline does not go through their holy ground. It remains to be seen what will happen under the incoming administration.)

Pertinent to these issues of how things stay humane and yet change dramatically over time, I encourage future readers to look at a new novel published this year by notable author Annie Proulx entitled *Barkskins*. This captivating, elegant novel takes place over 300+ years and traces the fates of two families whose progenitors came to Canada from France as indentured wood cutters in the early 17th century. I mention this here because what we see happening in North Dakota is indicative of how narrow our vision can and has tended to be. Our Western civilization has made the situation on the planet we all live most difficult. A battle over water—which so very recently seemed to be an inexhaustible resource,--is much like the chopping of the woods, the theme of *Barkskins*, which portrays generation after generation of choppers, settlers, timbermen, and loggers, caught up in their own time, willing to waste the resources and endanger them for those coming after. You reading this are “those coming after” and you will know far more than I how what we are doing today has shaped your lives.

Today in America in 2016 we have a day—created by business and the media—known as Black Friday. This names the day after Thanksgiving on which America is encouraged to shop its heart out in the major corporations’ stores, getting a head start on Christmas. Hard as it is to believe, people line up outside of stores during the night. This has become a tradition. There is an answering cry in the form of Local Business Day that takes place tomorrow, November 26. I’ll report on that in these pages. We will be part of that day and its Downtown Party Night, its Indiana Authors’ Festival. These are the things that keep our smallish city strong and vital. In our midst we now also have Four Seasons Local Market, an extension of our Farmers’ Market.

**December 30, 2016**

So, those of us here in our Indiana Bicentennial Year have nearly lived the solar circle of 2016 round. Our news, as these pages belie, has been deeply absorbed by the presidential cycle which has caused so many of us to worry about our American institutions themselves. Oxford Dictionaries in England has declared that this year’s Word of the Year to be “post-truth” since our airwaves and websites, Twitter, Facebook, and so forth have been slammed by a good deal of fake news. This is a “new” way of using communication media to sow fear and distrust, to give the populace at large the sense that “everyone has his own truth.” You readers in 2116, I hope, will be appalled by this, but we have no way to know that.

In contrast, the readers in 1916, an era where investigative journalism was really coming into its own, would have been scandalized. As we see it here in 2016, it’s as if we stand ready to abandon the whole enterprise of the Enlightenment, maybe the entire enterprise of civilization. Certainly our sense of “nation states” is being eroded as we watch increasingly in Europe and here as centralized national governments are becoming more dysfunctional and at the same time veering to a kind of nationalistic conservativism, a dangerous nativism. We even see the rise both in this country and in Europe of neo-Nazism and other neo-fascist parties whose spokespeople tend to harken back to “the good old days” and proclaim special favors for what were the dominant classes and ethnic groups a half a century ago, namely white Anglo-Saxon Protestants and Christians (though Christianity too is deeply divided as I write). Many of us thought the campaign of Donald J. Trump would be the last show of the hegemony of old, rich, white men. That hasn’t proven true. We now will endure a presidency of a man whose values show no respect for minorities, for Muslims, for disabled people, for women. You all will know how this has turned out and you will surely be touched by the naiveté I express—as all of us are when we read voices of an earlier era. At the same time, this all is happening, we also must not fail to notice that our country is undergoing a steady “browning” and this will continue. Our younger citizens are exceptionally outspoken about their support of multi-culturalism, universal health care, and other progressive issues which are now under serious attack.

Here in Crawfordsville, though, and these remarks can be applied to hundreds if not thousands of communities across the nation, as things look deeply grim given the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East (East Aleppo has fallen to the state thanks to Russia and Iran’s assistance to the Syrian state regime.) from Yemen to Lebanon, we flourish, we thrive, we work together and we enjoy the fruits of a vital community. We cross the political divide, especially when we all support local businesses, use the public library, and, especially, shop at the Farmers’ Market.

Even as preparations are being made for Donald Trump’s inauguration on January 20, quiet protests spring up in the form of no local bands applying to march in the parade. The Women’s March scheduled for January 21 is already promising to be one of the largest in US history especially given counterpart marches being held in cities throughout the nation, including one in Indianapolis. Please read about this march to see what the tenor of the nation is here on the ground in 2016. As Vice President Elect Pence (for a few more days our governor) is securing a temporary home in Chevy Chase, MD, his neighborhood has been quietly lining the streets with Gay Pride flags, flown by all of his new neighbors.

In my entry from the end of November, I pledged to overview a bit of the seasonal celebration in our town. It all began on the night after I wrote on November 25. On Small Business Saturday my husband and I ate breakfast at our new local sandwich and breakfast shop, Maxine’s on Green. We shopped at various downtown merchants stores, buying gift cards for friends and work colleagues at Maxine’s and, especially, at Four Seasons Farm Market. As we don’t eat meat, we use this opportunity to support these local, sustainable livestock raisers by buying gift cards for some meat-eating friends. Later in the day we visited the General Lew Wallace Study, built by the General before Indiana’s Centennial, for the little book fair where we bought several volumes by five different authors to send to friends and family. Ray Boomhower had a selection of his fine Indiana history books for young adults, the most famous being *The Sword and the* *Pen* about General Lew Wallace. Other authors had fantasy titles, business plan books, and a fresh way to look at prayer in Kelly O’Dell Stanley’s book *Praying Upside Down*.

That same night was Downtown Party Night which has become a recent institution and one of great success. On that night, the Christmas tree in front of the courthouse is lighted up, and most downtown merchants are open with special deals. Santa Claus is there for children; a horse and carriage plies the streets; Mayor Barton stands on the main corner of Washington and Main Streets and rings the bell for the Salvation Army. In our century, it is tradition that red kettles with slotted lids where money can be put in, as with a piggy bank, are everywhere. In the lobbies of our supermarkets and in Walmart and Big R and elsewhere, local volunteers ring a big gold hand bell encouraging folks to give and greeting all comers with “Merry Christmas!” or “Happy Holidays.” (In our highly charged political atmosphere, there are some who now say “Merry Christmas” aggressively and who look unfavorably at those who say “Happy Holidays.” Even our innocent wishes of good cheer can be interpreted politically, it seems.)

At Athens Arts Gallery over 600 people visited that night. The same could be said for all other stores and venues in town. The Vanity Theatre and the Community Chorus provided happy shows and musical entertainment for us all. In the chilly streets where we all greeted one another and renewed acquaintance with those we hadn’t seen for a time, we ate sweet roasted nuts being sold from a street cart by one of the employees of our new candy store in town; no one cared or knew that night who the other person voted for…though, to be fair, there is a wariness in the air.

A major civic event tied to our identity as one of Indiana’s Stellar Grant communities was the mid-month public unveiling of the plans for our upcoming new downtown park called Pike Place (see earlier reference). One a below-zero evening, about 50 of us came out to watch the architect prop up a colored map of the new space and explain its components. Major features include a performance space, landscaping, a gate to close Pike Street for a performance, decorative urns and trellis swings. Several of these features will be added as funds become available but the selection committee has provided a lovely oval –shaped park area with various sorts of seating to accommodate all sorts of events. Since this space is right beside the Saturday Farmers’ Market space, it will be a new kind of natural gathering space for our community as well. The fully-fledged park comes in at a cost of $1.5 million. Since the grant money available is for $500,000, the space will be fleshed out over time by gifts from community sponsors and crowd-sourcing avenues. We certainly hope that when you read this, the Pike Place Park will have been a popular, well-loved space for decades.

Next week our city and county officials will be sworn in at the city building, a repeat of the civic event that opens this Time Capsule essay, so it appears that this is the last entry in this rambling narrative jaunt through 2016.

May the world you live in be a healthy place. We know that you will love your children and love this community. We here who are alarmed about nothing less than ecocide and the vanishing of stable water supplies in this era of vast economic and social conflicts between those who have and those who have not, hope you have prevailed. Our era has seen the significant erosion of the middle class here in America. Any of us who can read and who are willing to think and listen realize that those of us in the so-called First World do not—not one of us—live sustainably. Were the entire world to live as we do, we would burn through a dozen planets like earth in remarkably short order. And yet, our times have some of the most creative, imaginative women and men with capacity to make some significant changes.

Our expressions in the arts have nearly no bounds. We know that the population will keep increasing on our small, blue marble hurtling through space; we know that ‘our tribe’ in this part of Indiana, mainly people of white, Northern European ancestry, is swiftly passing from world history. Statistics let us know that the browning of the USA is well underway. May those of you in 2116 find it a quaint idea that color ever registered as a meaningful way to regard other people. Our first African American president and his articulate, intelligent wife, Barak and Michelle Obama, are about to leave the White House. Most Americans, especially most black Americans, never thought they would see this in their lifetimes. Yet now it has happened. We leave it for history to judge the merits of how this era governed itself in times of great crises, both here and overseas. But, speaking metaphorically, if we elected such a president and then almost elected a woman president to follow him, we know that our America is on the move toward something different than we’ve had in the past. This sort of thing shows up everywhere. Our Supreme Court, for instance, which has been white and male and Protestant from the beginning currently has three women and people of color on it; and, before the death of Justice Scalia, was populated by six Catholics and three Jews. Things are changing…and not just via technological innovation.

This morning I was standing at our kitchen counter preparing an artichoke chickpea stew from a Moosewood Collective (*Moosewood Cooks at Home*) cookbook.\* The recipe called for fresh sage leaves and a stalk of fresh rosemary. Now, before last month’s deep frosts, I could have walked out our backdoor and walked ten steps to our little herb garden and plucked fresh versions of both….Well, I did that anyway. The herbs were still standing tall, but leathery in the case of the sage and brownish in the case of the rosemary. Since I didn’t have dried versions of either of these in my spice drawer, I plucked leaves and sniffed. Good to go: there were those essential oils that would give that wild, slightly piney flavor, deepening the potato stew already flavored and colored with turmeric and paprika. But, as all cooks know, you can’t get good results by just throwing leaves and stems into a stew---they have to be fished out later so they don’t show up in someone’s soup bowl. What to do? I was also out of cheesecloth….

I went to get a pillow slip, a once fine muslin one that my grandmother had used to encase the beautiful pair of feather pillows she made for each of her ten grandchildren in the early 1960s. I’d used my pair for decades, but just a month or so ago, I slit open the ancient pillow and emptied those special feathers into our compost pile. I scooped leaves and vegetable debris over them so they wouldn’t fly away. In my hand I then held an empty pillow and its tissue-thin pillow slip. Now I was going to use that frail, long-serving cloth for yet one more purpose. I was going to cut a square from it to make homemade cheesecloth to put the herbs in before I threw them into the pot. From the drawer I pulled out a pair of silver scissors, inherited from my other grandmother.

At that moment I paused, dumbstruck by time itself. There I was at the very end of 2016 using Grandma Diller’s scissors to cut up Grandma Mundy’s pillowslip. Those two dear people of my childhood and youth were born in 1884 and 1886, respectively. They both lived in Iowa but would have been in their early 30s when Indiana celebrated its Centennial. Now here I stand, still using their material things, in the 21st century. And so I stand and wonder how such things will be for you. My daughter is age 27. She was born in the ‘80s of the 20th century and it will be her material things that perhaps her granddaughter will hold in your era, sixteen years into the 22nd century. May those children or our children of our children still be glad to be human beings on this amazing planet of ours.

Our state has had dozens of wonderful celebratory events this year. Because I am married to a poet (Marc Hudson) who is widely published, we have participated in four or five readings in all parts of the state. One poet, a librarian in neighboring Hendricks County, wrote an occasional poem for storage in their Time Capsule. It applies to Montgomery County too. I asked her for a copy of “The Arrival” and I attach it here. I greet you future ones, as I have all year—and now wish you a fond farewell.

(Dr.) Helen Mundy Hudson

(\*Now I should add that this is not the way typical Montgomery County local folks typically cook, but I do have a typical food history for my time: as a person who began life on a farm which could have been exchanged for the thousands like it between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, I grew up observing but not understanding the death of sustainable farming and the birth of industrial, monoculture agriculture. About 40 years ago in this country a new local food movement was born, hoping to free us from the pounding, uniform presence of processed food and mono-crops which became so all-encompassing after WWII that it has been corn and soybean and wheat mono-cropping with animals raised apart on factory farms that has become the norm, denying our vital soils their health and denying us naturally delicious food. The local, sustainable, organic food movement, often known as Slow Food, has been gaining steam for the past several decades. The organic movement alone has grown tenfold within the past decade. I have been an enthusiastic participant in this movement, and a voice for it here in the county, mainly through my Real Food column that appears bi-weekly during the growing season in the *Journal Review*. Because of this passion, I cook from scratch and am a practitioner of all sorts of simple cooking. I especially like to cook the cuisines that arose over centuries from all over the world. Hence the Spanish-like artichoke chickpea stew I describe making above.)

Here is the poem from Hendricks County that applies to Montgomery County (mainly) as well.

The Arrival

1. Hello, Future

This poem lives in darkness too long.

It knows nothing of time’s in between song.

Entombed for safe keeping, these pages preserved,

Will they be yellowed? Will they be curved?

Who are you? Who am I?

We share coordinates, the same patch of sky.

Do Hoosiers gather to discover our past,

To reveal what fades, what actually lasts?

1. The Present, 2016

The bees are in distress this year, the rain and heat relent,

Yet Autumn’s harvest, corn and beans, is magnificent.

A county full of contrasts, farming exists with the digital age.

A generation of people move to screens from the page.

A dollar doesn’t go far, won’t buy a gallon of gas.

Drivers groan about roundabouts. How long did they last?

Families commune and play, safely within our parks.

There’s still a certain kind of quiet that comes after dark.

1. Just Yesterday

I heard an owl after sunset as he lifted from his stand,

“Who are the earnest people of Indiana land?”

He carried his song through cool country starlight.

His question lingered throughout the long night.

Are we workers? Are we toilers?

Are we preservers or spoilers?

How time will measure us, we do not know.

We can’t predict what will endure, what will grow.

1. Who We Are

We are milkweed for the Monarch. We’re the daylilies in June.

We’re the pep song at a rally, the parade tractor’s humming tune.

We’re the fish that needs clean water; we’re fresh asphalt covering roads.

We’re the lifting of an airplane circling over orchard groves.

We’re ancient Sycamores, shading quiet afternoon dreams.

We’re the hybrid quilters crafting, hand and machine-made dreams.

The east side dense with people, the west side, fields and farms,

Hendricks County is complex and full of unnamed charms.

1. Questions for the Future

Will there still be fields to tend? Will church doors remain open

For the future that is coming especially for the unspoken?

Will the bees still buzz and linger? Will the owl in the dark?

Will that certain kind of quiet always be there in the park?

The city grows closer and closer, our ranks grow more diverse.

There’s beauty in our rainbow; many paths yet to traverse.

We arrive in your present, with vibrant hopes alive for you

That our humble Hoosier hearts will still prevail too.

-Stacy Post