



Nov. 18 - The Great American Smokeout

Local Commentary

Congratulations to John Chan for winning blues award

Woonsocket

Woonsocket businessman John Chan is going to Memphis in February to receive the prestigious "Keeping the Blues Alive Award" in the nightclub category. The 2011 Keeping the Blues Alive Awards will be presented in Memphis on Saturday, February 5, 2011 at 10:00am. The Blues Foundation will honor 21 individuals and organizations including John. The 27th International Blues Challenge (IBC) weekend of events will feature the final rounds of the world's most prestigious blues competition and largest gathering of blues acts, as well as seminars, showcases, and receptions for blues societies, fans, and professionals. The recipients of this year's awards are people and organizations who are an integral part of not only promoting blues music, but of preserving it as well. Their work applies to the business of recorded music, but also to live events, print media, radio and visual broadcasts, and increasingly, the internet.

John Chan decided to add music to the restaurant while a student at Providence College. In 1977, the first act to perform at Chan's was a band featuring vocalist Jean McKenna O'Donnell, Alvin Pulley on guitar, Rodney Delassantra on accordion, Bill Gilbert on drums and Woonsocket legend Sam Sherman on slide trombone. As time went on Chan introduced blues artists and the line up shifted from jazz to blues performances and the supper club's reputation as a blues venue grew. Congratulations to John's work in keeping the music going from this international music organization.

Woonsocket

Clearly the future construction of the Woonsocket water treatment has surfaced as one of the three biggest issues under consideration by Mayor Leo Fontaine's administration. The first issue is fiscal solvency with enough cash flow to pay current and future bills. The second issue is reconciling the school department's finances with the city's ability to fund its share of the department's budget. But clearly there is a group of citizens, some of whom work for the water department, others from the Woonsocket Taxpayer's Coalition and several other private citizens who are monitoring how much the water project will cost and whether the project takes on a local or regional direction. And while important decisions are under consideration, the city's veteran public works director Michael Annarummo is phasing himself out of city government as he looks toward retirement. Under a 2013 consent order by DEM to get the plant going, a citizen's advisory committee will be named shortly, a series of public hearings, con-

tract bids, contract awards and the actual construction of the plant is 36 months away. Questions remain whether to hook up with Pawtucket's water system or build a plant nearby. Even as late as Monday night, Annarummo says other options are under review. Emotions ran high this week as officials complained the issue is being debated on radio talk shows (WNRI) with misinformation and rumors about the project that have political overtones rather than factual information. As Mike Annarummo put it "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing and that's what happens on the radio a lot of times....you really have to have the full picture."



Roger Bouchard

Woonsocket

A little good economic news is always encouraging. At Monday's council meeting, it was revealed that a packaging manufacturing company at 128 Singleton Street in the former Jacob Finklestein coat manufacturing building is stepping up operations. Diversified Distribution, a company that molds foam packaging materials, needed permission from the city council to increase electrical capacity to accommodate new equipment recently installed. The small company is expected to employ 9 to 12 employees to run the machinery.

Woonsocket

The internet is impacting radio listening. A company that monitors listening to radio stations on the internet released its mid November popularity ratings of news/talk stations. Website Streaming Radio Guide reveals that WPRV 790am/ Providence came in #1 with a popularity rating of 77, WNRI 1380am/Woonsocket was # 2 with a 67 rating, WHJJ 920am/Providence was #3 at a 45 rating and WPRO 630am/Providence ranked 4th with 19 rating. The statistics were released on November 15th.

Woonsocket

There's an interesting little shop at 999 Cass Avenue called Ducharme Jewelry, Coins and Collectibles. Owner Larry Ducharme showed me a 1935 industrial survey authored by Arthur I. Darman local industrialist, theater owner and chairman of Woonsocket Industrial Board. The 150 page document was written to encourage manufacturing to locate in Woonsocket and to "keep politics away from the field of

battle" (economic development). The booklet revealed some interesting facts about Woonsocket in the heyday of textile manufacturing including 4 pages of companies operating within the city including a paper tube, rubber products, mattress products, confectionary and dozens of textile related companies. Included in the brochure was an organizational chart of Woonsocket government where the Mayor (Toupin) was paid 3500 yearly salary. There were 5 aldermen and 15 common council members paid 300 and 200 respectively. The city also employed a milk inspector and tree warden. School committee members served for no pay in 1935. Woonsocket's population was 49,643 compared to 44,000 in the year 2000.

Woonsocket

Former state representative and majority leader and Woonsocket native Gerard Martineau gets out of prison today. The former lawmaker who was convicted of corruption is due to be released from federal custody this morning. Martineau, who sold paper and plastic bags, admitted using his political influence to defeat legislation opposed by major customers, CVS and Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. He pleaded guilty in November 2007 and was sentenced the following February to a 37 month prison sentence. He was the second ex-legislator, after John Celona, to admit to selling his office in a probe known as Operation Dollar Bill. As part of a \$900,000 corruption scheme that the longtime Woonsocket Democrat admitted to, Martineau sold 10 million bags to Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island — but fewer than 2 million bags were ever manufactured.

Woonsocket

The book is now available. A newly published book by Woonsocket photographer, Judith Potter will be sold and signed tonight. A Feminine Touch: Women Working in Woonsocket, is Potter's portrait of the high achieving women of with leadership roles in the community. The book showcases 34 leading women in the Woonsocket area.

There will be two book signings, tonight from 5:00-7:00pm at the Museum of Work and Culture and Monday November 22nd from 6:30-9:00pm at the Harris Library on Clinton Street. Cost is 20.00 a copy. Roger Bouchard will be master of ceremonies and Mayor Leo Fontaine will be the city's greetings. The public is invited to both signings.

Roger Bouchard is general manager of Woonsocket radio station WNRI. Email him at RogerWNRI@prodigy.net. His column appears every Thursday.

Write to us

We welcome your letters to the editor on any subject. All letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. We do not publish anonymous letters.

Mail your letters to the editor to Newsroom, The Call, 75 Main St., Woonsocket RI 02895.

E-Mail your letters to editor@woonsocketcall.com

For best results:

- Keep your letter short — no more than 500 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity.
- Type your letter to help reduce the likelihood of

errors.

- When writing about people, identify them by their full — first and last — name, and full title if they have one.
- If your letter must appear by a certain date, send it at least one week in advance.
- We reserve the right not to run endorsement letters in support of or against a particular candidate; letters addressing actual issues in a campaign will be given more consideration.
- We will print no letters that we deem libelous or in bad taste.

Commentary

Travel broadens someone else's mind

By MARC MUNROE DION

While President Barack Obama was reaching out to the Muslim world and reminiscing about the pleasures of a partially Indonesian childhood, I was in Las Vegas, where the goings on are guaranteed to offend every major religion.

I don't like to travel, so I don't, but I had business in Las Vegas (yes, that's possible), and so I went.

I didn't mind taking off my boots and belt to get on an airplane. It's my way of reaching out to the Muslim world, some of whom want bloody chunks of my body to rain down on an Illinois cornfield.

Obama, God or Allah love him, figures us fat, flip-flop wearing home folks want to hear that Indonesia is "part of him." Which part? The part from Hawaii, the Harvard part, the lawyer part, the black part, the white part, the African part, the Kansas part, the can't-get-us-out-of-Afghanistan-or-Iraq part or the smiley, hope-y, good dad part?

Yeah, Obama's got more parts than Frankenstein, and I kinda wish the guy would pick a part and stick with it.

Vegas was fine, just full of happy Americans, all kinds, happy foreigners, mostly the Asian kind, happy drunk people, mostly the European kind, some snooty Argentinians and a raft of Hispanics who do the actual work. If there were any Muslims there, they weren't wearing "traditional garb."

I lost three bucks in a slot machine and got half whacked on \$3-a-pop Irish whisky shots in a lounge with poker machines set right into the bar. It was my way of reaching out to the Hispanic bartender. When drinks are only \$3, I tip well.

Continuing on his big "people who hate me tour," Obama headed off to South Korea, to visit some American jobs. He should go to China next, because that's where the rest of the jobs went.

Meanwhile, back in Vegas, I saw three Elvis impersonators in three days, all of them wearing traditional garb, or at least traditional Elvis garb.

On the strip, small Hispanic men handed my wife and I "business cards" directing us to the nearest warehouse, where I assume traditional garb is optional, though I bet the help will be more than happy to put on a burqa if you pay extra.

Of course, that burqa wouldn't stay on long, not any longer than Obama's Indonesian-ness will stay on before he becomes Korean or Kansan or lawyerly or socialist-like or whatever it takes to pass health care bills no one understands.

But they're good-hearted, those health care bills. They reach out to the average American just like the average American was Indonesian or Korean. Obama is nothing if not good-hearted, unless of course he's Indonesian that day more than he is good-hearted or if he's having one of his lawyer days. You're best off catching him on one of his good-dad days, when you just might score some free health care. You don't want to catch Obama on one of his Republican days. If you do, you're going to get another deployment to Afghanistan.

Vegas is weird. It's like the Lego version of the real world, which is why the Hispanic guys handing out warehouse business cards seem so out of place. After all, you're standing in front of a big replica of the Eiffel Tower, just about to go into a gift shop run by a friendly looking Asian lady. Why — in that moment of Lego-constructed French, smiling Asian lady, about-to-buy-something-for-your-mom fun — would you be looking for a whore?

And you're really not even supposed to use the word "whore" anymore. Polite people use "prostitute" when they're writing and "hooker" when they're talking. You can't say "Moslem" anymore, either. You have to say "Muslim." Obama says "Muslim."

Me and Obama. Two American boys who grew up to take our love and our money to the ends of the earth, me to Las Vegas and Obama to wherever America's enemies need reassurance from someone who may or may not be just like them or me or you.

Obama. The Lego president. You can put his parts together any way you want, anywhere you want, and then you can take him apart and put him back together a new way.

In a way, it's a pity Obama went into politics. If he had moved to Vegas, he would have been a great Elvis impersonator.

Editor's note: Our weekly columnist Connie Schultz is on assignment. During her absence, we are using Marc Munroe Dion of Creators Syndicate.

Letters to the Editor

Revisit street light policy

The recent fatal accident in Slatersville is heart wrenching to those of us who knew and loved 13-year-old Scott Wright. It is a horrific tragedy beyond words for his family and countless other individuals.

Over the past year or so the North Smithfield Town Council has reduced the number of street lights in the town as a cost-saving measure. I do believe that at this point in time it is critical that the council review this policy. Here are some questions that I hope the council members will ask themselves in the process.

Is the lighting of athletic fields and tennis courts for late night events more important than providing safer roads?

How will you live with your-

selves if inadequate lighting is a factor in a fatal accident in an area where a street light has been turned off?

It is the responsibility of the Town Council to provide safe road conditions for everyone. Those traveling in automobiles, on bicycles, and by foot depend on that. If it is determined that we can't afford this additional lighting, perhaps the priorities in this town need to be changed so that we can.

I certainly hope that the recent accident will lead to a change in the current town policy that will result in safer roads. The bottom line is: Can we afford not to turn these lights back on?

Doreen Gardner
North Smithfield

Poet's Corner

SINKING INTO A HOME COMA

Murky, cold afternoons,
Mirror my soul these days.
I sink into a home coma
Seeking warmth,
Where there is none.
Trees bare and skeletal,
Hide their nakedness
From mother nature's
stripping
Of foliage, first lush green
Then to autumn hues of gold.

What beauty is there in
browns
Of grassless earth
And leafless trees?

True beauty sees
With the eyes of the soul,
Not a withered tree
But a towering sapling,
Against the backdrop
Of God's blue sky.

Open up thy soul
To winter's majesty,
Seen by discerning eyes.
That each season
Liveth its own glory.
Remind thyself,
If you truly seek beauty,
First look into the deepest
Chambers of thy soul.

By Evelyn L. D. Cournoyer,
Woonsocket