

Opinion



Ryan Winslett
Editor

Remembering my first job

Labor Day was this past Monday, which meant a lot of folks took the opportunity to hit the road for a brief vacation or just relax at home for a change.

Despite the holiday's name, you're supposed to do anything but "labor" on the first Monday of September.

Given that the holiday is meant to celebrate the American spirit of pulling oneself up by your bootstraps to earn an honest living, that got the *Times* office reminiscing about first jobs.

We decided to bring various members of the community in on the fun, asking everyone from the mayor to the local fire chief about how they earned their first paycheck. Some were paid for manual labor on neighboring farms, some stood behind the counter at ice cream shops, and others took on what is perhaps the most famous first job on the planet: delivering the newspaper to their neighbors.

It's a fun read and you can find it on page 1B of this very issue.

As for me, I certainly didn't get my start typing away on a keyboard. Instead, I used to wear a blue apron and serve as a courtesy clerk at a Safeway in Globe, Ariz.

If I had to guess, this particular Safeway is about as old as the state it resides in. If you've never been to Globe, much of the town looks like it basically grew out of the ground. The community wasn't planned; it just sort of expanded outward naturally like vines made out of brick, mortar and some well-worn asphalt.

My Safeway was located just behind the Holy Angels Church in downtown. I know for a fact that particular church has been around since about 1916 so, again, there's a lot of history there.

Unlike the local Safeway, the Globe store is relatively small. The staff was equally small, which meant my job description was pretty fluid. I'd spend an hour bagging groceries, another rounding up carts, another organizing the shelves, another discarding expired produce, another sweeping the floors and then another organizing storage or helping unload trucks.

My favorite part of the job, though, was cleaning the meat department. I know that sounds morbid, but it was ice cold in that room and I was working at Safeway in the summer. Cleaning the meat department also meant nobody would bother me for a couple hours, which was an appreciated change of pace.

Also, not going to lie, it was kind of cool to get to walk into a room clad in rubber and douse everything with a high-powered hose. It was a lot like washing a car; only the car was the room I was standing in.

From Safeway I went on to farmhand at a small ranch. I took care of half a dozen horses and various other forms of livestock in the mornings and filled the rest of the day with everything from standard landscaping to installing sprinkler systems, mending fences and the like. It was lonely work, and the Arizona sunshine didn't exactly make it easy, but I still have fond memories of those days when I used to wear cowboy boots and always had a pair of leather gloves tucked in my back pocket.

Development

A letter from:
Jeff Dover

What was the nature of Willdan's "error?" Did their contract require them to collect the \$417,294? If that was in their contract, why was the city willing to allow an outside firm to collect such a large amount of its money? Where was the obstacle to the city collecting the money? Who "forgets" to collect \$417,294? Why did the city abdicate its authority to issue a building permit?

Inspections are one thing and understandably deserving of professional oversight. However, issuance of a building permit is a purely civic function once consultants proclaim all is right. How long following the issuance of the building permit was it before city managers noticed that construction had begun? The site is only a block or two from our municipal offices.

Why would the town incur "significant legal costs?" Didn't the city's attorney previously review and accept the development agreement as a sound contract? In halting construction at its inception instead of waiting until a certificate of occupancy is sought for the finished project, wouldn't the city have enhanced its collection position?

The Fountain Hills Times reports that Shea doesn't believe they owe the money because the fee wasn't specified in the Development Agreement, yet they report that the city manager said that if the fees had been waived, then the waiver would have appeared in the Development Agreement. If that's the case, then where is the fee set as a requirement and agreed upon by the developer?

It would be a good idea for the town to post the Development Agreement on the town's website, so that the citizens can review the details themselves; \$417,000 is a lot of money and something isn't adding up here.

Chicken Little

A letter from:
David Adler

Historically, the story of Chicken Little, Henny Penny and Turkey Lurkey goes back 2,500 years.

The "Chicken Little" type is usually skinny, emaciated, dried out, all from excessive nervousness. Of course Chicken Little would say, "The sky is falling." With a pinched face, Chicken Little looks like that naked plastic chicken that announced the secret word on the old Groucho Marx TV show.

A type like Chicken Foot; Chicken Little and Chicken Foot forms a negative nexus. Chicken Little is excessive compulsive, not obsessive compulsive. So much so, it is like he or she throws themselves out of their self. Thump, thump, thump. They throw things around and down, angrily. Even their grumbling words, under their breath, escapes their mouths; thump, thump, thump. Complainers with nothing to really complain about.

If there were a benign

chemical that could be added to the water supply that could alter that negative nexus in a positive way, like that chemical lawfully ordered for chemical castration of convicted rapists, it would help in healing psychological problems.

It is imperative for you to avoid that negative nexus. Spot it, run away and stay clear for your own safety.

Your ability to see that negative nexus coming near is a first step toward your own mental well-being.

Do not forget, the sky is not falling. It may fall a bit here and a bit there, but mostly the sky is not falling.

The facts

A letter from:
Dick Holper

The lagoon project is in the early stages. It has already drawn significant comment both in favor and in opposition.

All are entitled to express opinions on whether the project should go forward. From a review of the letters which opposed the project and were published in last week's *Times*, however, it appears that the courtesy and respect filter which applies to free speech may have been somewhat lacking.

For 20 years I have represented clients in Fountain Hills. During that time I have worked with Council members Cecil Yates and Art Tolis. I worked with Art when he was on the Planning and Zoning Commission and I worked with Cecil when we both served on that Commission.

In years of working with Art I have found him to be committed to the best interests of the town. I also know him as a good citizen, serving as the president of the morning Rotary Club and working on numerous civic projects.

Parking, costs and whether the project involves a proper use of resources are legitimate concerns. Vague "concerns" or personal attacks are not.

I am troubled when Council member Tolis' support of this project is attacked not on the merit, but on the basis that he has "lost his mind," it is a "dumb idea" or is a "colossal folly." Those are not supportable grounds for objection.

Perhaps we should allow the review process to work. If the project doesn't make sense, we should have confidence that our elected officials will recognize that fact and the project will not be approved.

In the meantime, let's analyze what is presented and base opposition or support on a factual basis.

Parking

A letter from:
Charles Vascellaro

Are councilman Tolis and some of the other council members that are supporting the lagoon telling us spending millions on the project is now more important than funding the necessities and priorities of our town?

Mr. Tolis said he is upset about the inaccurate information and misinformed comments being circulated. Does that include the

misinformation he told us about the sanitary district having no concerns? Also the overstatement about a green light claim from the Arizona state parks department? Is he telling us our retired sanitary district manager lied when he said they do have concerns about the lagoon?

Tolis has stated after the first two studies are completed in October, more extensive studies will follow. I guess the Applied Economics firm hired to determine the cost does not matter? He wants to continue with more studies no matter what the cost.

Considering our town's charter, constitution and bylaws we have a nonprofit identity: are we permitted by law to engage in a business for profit? Is it a conflict of interest for a city to issue itself a permit or license to run a business for profit, like food concessions? I am sure the other food businesses will love that. Is it legal to use tax payers' money to build, own and operate a business for profit and losses?

Have the council members read any of the parking regulations laws? They are the laws that ensure traffic safety and adequate off-street parking. Sec.20.55.030 (A) on the same site as the use necessary such parking: (B) within 300 ft. of walking distance, etc. It goes on to regulate the amount of spaces for swimming pools, concessions, employees, handicap and even motorcycles; also, aisles and driveways.

This parking lot will be huge! Residences in the area, what about noise?

Long-term

A letter from:
Roger Bendet

I have been reading information about the proposed Lagoon, positive and negative. The study due in October should be very informative.

There are many challenges to face: parking, utilization, who it will attract, costs, liability etc.

The statistics prove our community is quickly becoming a retirement haven. The question is will the lagoon reverse this? I suspect that it will not. If people come here to use it they won't spend much money and they certainly won't be able to afford our relatively high real estate values.

If we want a balanced demographic in town (age and interests), can we please have a discussion about our schools? As the average age of our population grows, the enrollment in our schools drops. Let's pass a bond measure that goes completely to our school system. Get the best teachers (pay them well) and we will have people coming here, buying homes and by the way, spending sales taxable money.

It's called long-term thinking and the benefit is a balanced community with people of all ages. For those of you that say "I raised my kids already, I'm not paying to raise others," may I remind you someone your age payed to support your kids' schooling? Let's think long term and big picture and not just about an expensive, possibly bad idea.

Our viewpoint

Opioid emergency

Back in June, Governor Doug Ducey declared a state of emergency concerning the state of opioid abuse in Arizona. That proclamation received a lot of attention at the time, but quickly faded into the background due to timing. Schools were letting out for summer break, families were heading off on summer vacation and temperatures began to skyrocket. In short, folks had other things on their mind.

The Fountain Hills Coalition looks to bring the issue back to the forefront in the coming months. As noted on page 1A of this week's paper, the town's organization dedicated to the prevention of drug abuse – particularly among youngsters – is back in full swing alongside the brand new academic year. The group is known for focusing its efforts based on the needs of the community and a direction provided by data, and data can't be much more thorough than what has been presented by the Arizona Department of Health Services in recent months.

At azdhs.gov, they've managed to compile statewide opioid data in real time, and the results are pretty staggering. As of this writing, there have been 273 suspected opioid-related deaths from June 15 to Aug. 25. In that same period of time, Arizona has faced 2,138 suspected opioid overdoses and 156 cases of neonatal abstinence syndrome; babies born with possible drug-related withdrawal symptoms.

In the related story, Coalition director Shelly Mowrey offers some insight into what can be done on the personal and local level to help combat these issues, including taking advantage of the upcoming drug "take back day" on Oct. 28 and educating oneself on when and how to get help when opioid abuse is expected. The ADHS website (azdhs.gov) also offers a ton of resources worth looking into for those dealing with these types of issues or simply wanting to be prepared in case they ever arise.

As Mowrey points out, Fountain Hills is a pretty lucky community in this regard, reporting opioid deaths on the lowest end of the spectrum over the past two months. But we believe that vigilance is key in matters such as these. That willingness to take these issues seriously is why our community has not been impacted by the opioid epidemic as severely as others. We encourage our readers to continue looking after each other.

Park Place

A letter from:
Walter Maiwald

Whenever I walk down the Avenue of the Fountains, I cringe at the sight of the Park Place project looming over the Avenue. I, like many others, addressed Town Council about the project.

A primary objection was the height and style of the development. Town Council, of course, dismissed our concerns and approved the project. When I questioned whether our fire department would be able to handle a fire in this structure, I was assured we were fine. Now I see the Chief wants a new aerial truck. I wonder why? Aerials run from \$650,000 to \$1million.

And to make matters worse, the developer owes our town over \$400,000 in fees and unfortunately may get away with not paying them. These development fees would definitely help the town, which is supposedly struggling to make ends meet. Our town buildings need to be re-roofed, the Fountain Lake needs a new liner and our roads need repaving. On top of that, the cost of public safety will continue to rise. We need this money. So the question becomes: was this mismanagement, ineptitude or something worse?

President Truman had a sign on his desk which read, "The buck stops here." Ultimately, the buck stops with council, the mayor and the town manager. Our building department, which reports to the holy trinity, should have issued those permits to start construction once the fees were paid. The other company should have performed the inspections and reported their findings

to our building department and nothing else.

Having moved here full-time from Michigan a year ago, all I can say is that if this had happened in my old community, recall petitions would already be circulating. Time for me to look up recalls in Arizona statutes. And don't even get me started about the lagoon!

A solution

A letter from:
Hugh Henry

Twenty-two years ago I applied for a building permit in this town. The procedure is easy to understand and conceptually you don't start activity until approved and the permit is paid.

The major building in downtown has not followed procedures and it looks like we will have another legal issue yet to be resolved. I suggest that the town turn in its charter to be a town back to the county government. The only item we would need is a road district to take care of what the people need most in this town.

To date, the town has done a poor job of doing a minimal amount of street repair while many other superfluous projects seem to take higher priority (Crystal Lagoon, Observatory). Look around at the number of business establishments that have not been able to survive in this town and yet we approve more empty buildings,

Freedom

A letter from:
B.J. Taylor

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil...Not to

(cont. on page 7A)



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