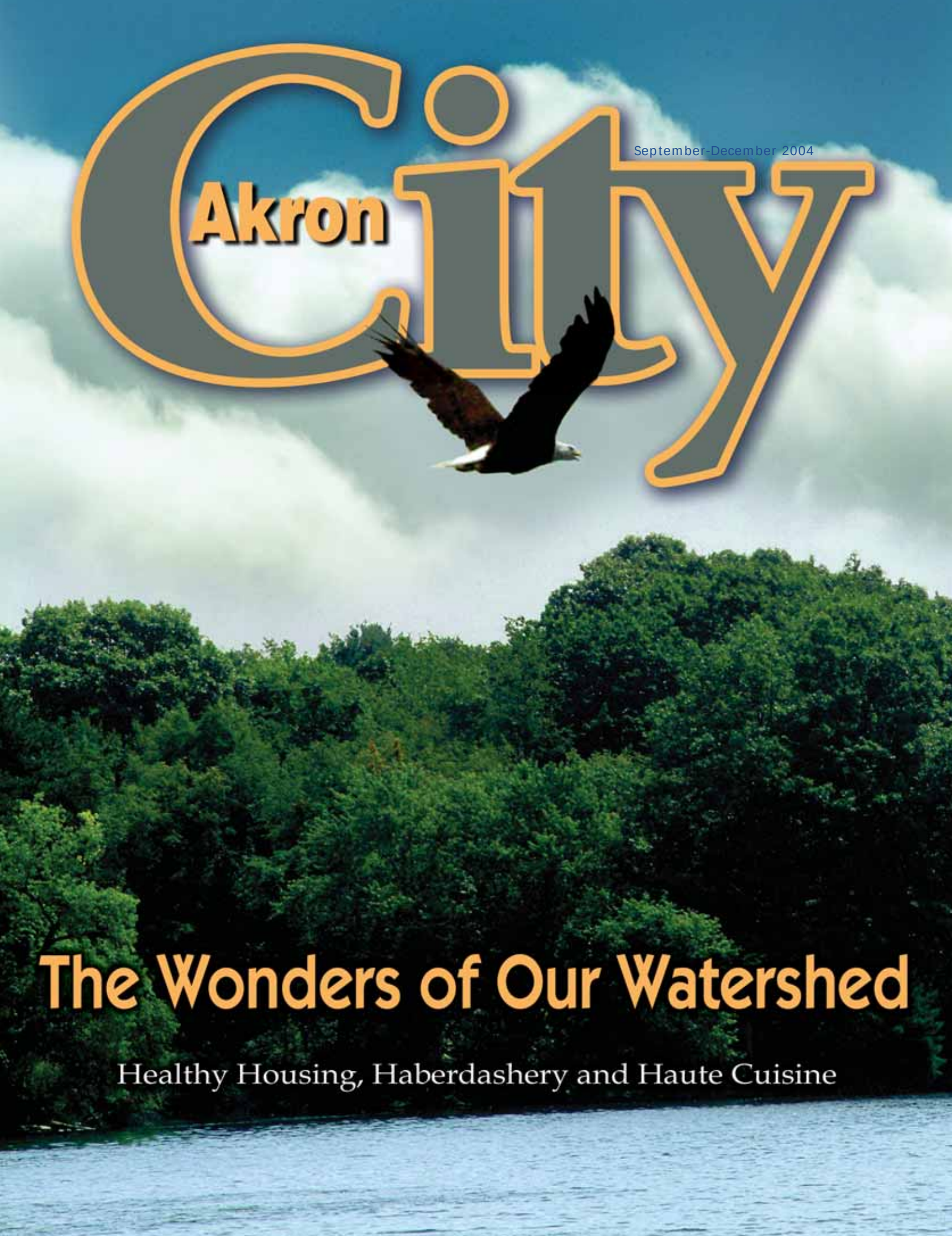
Akron City

September-December 2004



The Wonders of Our Watershed

Healthy Housing, Haberdashery and Haute Cuisine

From City Hall...

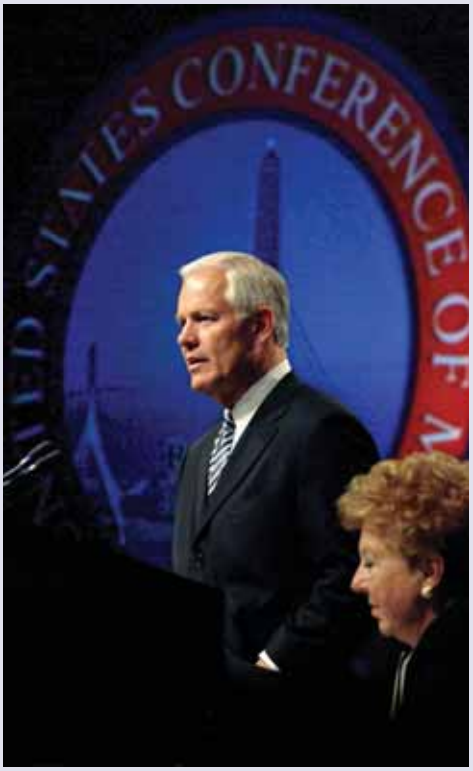
Spotlights, Fair and Foul

As Akron settled into summer, I became president of the United States Conference of Mayors. This next year, I will represent the 500 cities of the conference.

Many residents say they're proud that Akron is in the national spotlight. That will be especially true when the mayors who make up the conference leadership come to Akron, just one month before our national elections.

I fully intend to make sure that the presidential and congressional candidates know which issues mayors care most about: creating jobs, home ownership, homeland security and investing in our cities.

While Akron will receive the benefits of this national exposure, the conference itself will pay all of my expenses for the increased travel that comes with the position. It promises to be a challenging and exciting year.



Mayor Plusquellic delivers inaugural address to annual meeting of US Conference of Mayors in Boston in June. USCM Vice-President Beverly O'Neill, Mayor of Long Beach, California listens, alongwith 500 other mayors from around the U.S.

As you know, when we hear about an abandoned property, we work as quickly as the law permits — not very fast at all, in my opinion — to force the owner to bring the house up to code — or ultimately, we tear the house down.

It amused me to see *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* complaining about abandoned houses in that city's neighborhoods, given that Akron underwent a grueling TV investigation in May over our "aggressive" effort to rid neighborhoods of similar eyesores.

According to WEWS-TV, *a young man who dreamed of rebuilding a burned-out home and making it his residence was stopped by arrogant city officials, who demolished a perfectly good house, thereby destroying $30,000 of improvements he had made to the structure.*

There is one problem with the report: **IT'S NOT TRUE** as it was reported.

The story so dramatically told for seven consecutive days was fiction — a carefully crafted miniseries designed to increase Channel 5's ratings. So intent was the reporter on capturing your attention — and improving the station's poor news ratings — that he purposely neglected important information we gave him: more than 2,000 pages of city documents!

Since 1990, we have invested $51.5 million in housing. Where people ask for help to rehabilitate older homes, we readily provide it. We have directly assisted in the rebuilding or remodeling of 4,617 older homes. Where dilapidated houses once stood, we have built 415 brand-new homes.

The TRUTH is that our housing inspectors follow the law. In this instance, the Cambridge Avenue homeowner was given more than two years to repair his house.

The TRUTH is that the owner is a registered landlord who owns at least four other properties. (We had complaints from his neighbors and a tenant who had no heat this past winter.)

The TRUTH is that only after he failed to do the work twice promised to the Board of Housing Appeals did the city order the demolition on September 30, 2003.

The TRUTH is that after the demolition order was issued, the owner filed an appeal in Common Pleas Court. Judges twice ordered that the home be torn down.

The TRUTH is that after all that time and legal proceedings, the Health Department still believed the owner deserved one last chance. On March 11 — seven days before the demolition — the housing department returned to the property to make one last inspection. The TRUTH is that the home still had no kitchen and no bathroom, and that the owner refused to allow inspectors onto the second floor of the house.

The TRUTH is that the only mistake made in this case was in allowing this unsafe, uninhabitable house to stand for as long as it did.

Most residents appreciate our policy. So do Akron's firefighters, who have asked us to keep demolishing vacant homes. Their very lives depend upon the structural integrity of the houses they enter.

When city employees have not done their jobs properly, I often take action — disciplinary actions and firings. The supervisor interviewed for this TV series was demonized. The reporter even went to the employee's home while his children were there, to make his "show" more dramatic.

It was dramatic. It was a "show." Too bad it was not the news. Viewers were deprived of the TRUTH!

Is Channel 5 on your side? Channel 5 is on Channel 5's side.

AKRON

Donald L. Plusquellic

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Akron City is produced three times a year by the City of Akron Communications Department. The magazine and recycling calendar is distributed by U.S. mail to all residents of Akron by Keep Akron Beautiful, a not-for-profit corporation in the state of Ohio.

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Our Cover Photo...
…is **Bruce Ford's** glimpse of one of the bald eagles that have taken up nesting at Akron's reservoir, Lake Rockwell in Portage County. The property is owned by the people of Akron and is a paradise for rare animals and plants whose habitats are being preserved.

Tell us what you think by replying to *editor@ci.akron.oh.us*
Or share your thoughts with the mayor at *mayor@ci.akron.oh.us*

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Housing Code Keeps Neighborhoods Healthy

By Michael Moser, M.D., MPH, Director of Public Health

A single blighted house can have significant adverse effects on a residential street and the people who live there. Hard work and a financial commitment can maintain an older house. Most of us make that investment.

During the 1910s and 1920s, when housing was at a premium, many low-income and working-class residents lived under blighted conditions. Recognizing this as unacceptable, Akron's leaders adopted the Environmental Health Housing Code. The Akron Health Department is responsible for its enforcement.

Each year, the department receives roughly 1,500 complaints regarding substandard residences. A registered sanitarian from the health department's Housing Division investigates each complaint. (City ordinance mandates periodic inspections of certain residential rental properties, whether a complaint is registered or not.)

When sanitarians identify a violation, they must provide a formal notice of that violation to the property owner or manager, complete with directions for corrective measures. Housing division staffers then work with owners to develop a reasonable plan for correction, usually making multiple visits to assess progress and offer advice.

If the owner or manager fails to make a good-faith effort to comply, the health department may assess a fine. If the dwelling is deemed unfit for human habitation or use, it will be ordered vacated until it is either sufficiently repaired or demolished.

Some dwellings are simply too dilapidated to repair; some owners are unwilling or unable to fulfill their responsibilities. A small percentage of the cases handled by the health department fall into this category. Owners who meet certain qualifications may choose to take advantage of a federally funded program that will pay for demolition.

There are a number of checks and balances throughout the process. Owners and managers may appeal a health department order or notice to the Housing Appeals Board. The board is made up of five Akron residents appointed by the mayor, with the consent of Akron City Council. Any order or decision of the board may be appealed to Common Pleas Court.

In situations where necessary repairs of an unfit dwelling or premises have not been made and do not appear to be forthcoming, the Health Department may refer the case to the Housing Appeals Board to consider for demolition. When this occurs, the board holds a public hearing where neighbors of the property can speak, as may the owner or owner's representative.

Based upon the evidence, the Housing Appeals Board then decides if demolition is warranted. If the board determines that a demolition is warranted, it issues a demolition order. The property owner then has 30 days to appeal this order in court or demolish the property.

In the absence of a court appeal or owner-directed demolition, the city's Department of Planning and Urban Development then assumes responsibility for arranging the demolition.

Enforcement of the Akron Environmental Housing Code is an important part of the safety net that maintains Akron as a safe and decent place to live and raise a family.

Blighted neighborhood in the past

That same neighborhood today

Steps Before a House Is Demolished

A complaint is made by a neighbor, councilperson, concerned passer by.

Housing Division staff performs inspection.

Property is referred to Board of Housing Appeals.

Housing Appeals Board holds public hearing. The owner or a representative is provided the opportunity to present reasons and evidence why demolition should not proceed or more time should be allowed.

Housing Appeals Board makes a decision. Cases are removed from the agenda if the board believes substantial repairs are made following an extension.

The owner has 30 days to appeal to the Common Pleas Court. Demolition does not proceed until courts decide the appeal.

Dan Kelly can tip his hat to his grandfather Dan, who started The Hatterie almost a century ago.

Rolling Acres

Glad Hatter Continues in Steps of His Dad and Grandfathers

By Robert Sberna

In 1908, when Dan Kelly opened The Hatterie in downtown Akron, his staple items were top hats and derbies made of rabbit-fur felt.

These days, The Hatterie, a landmark among Akron businsses, doesn't sell many derbies. But Kelly's grandson, also named Dan, still carries a line of traditional felt derbies as well as fedoras, straw boater hats and other headwear that was popular during a time when virtually all men wore hats.

The younger Kelly, who took over management of The Hatterie from his father in 1982, has broadly expanded the store's inventory to keep pace with changing styles. "We offer everything in hats from A to Z," says Kelly. "We carry watch caps, homburgs, sun visors, baseball caps, stocking hats and everything else."

Kelly says he has more than 10,000 hats in his 1,500-square-foot store, which he relocated to Romig Road in the Rolling Acres shopping area in 1990. At that time, he also began selling ladies' hats, which he says have been "good sellers."

Noting that his great-grandfather was a hatmaker in Ireland, Kelly says that his grandfather worked in the hat industry in Danbury, Connecticut, before relocating to Akron and establishing The Hatterie. He also founded a hat factory in Akron that closed shortly after the 1929 stock market crash.

Kelly says the trend toward casual attire has led to the decline in the popularity of hats. "There are only a few men's hat stores remaining in Ohio," he says, adding there's a possibility his 20-year-old daughter may step in and continue the business.

"If she's interested, she can take over," he says.

Neighborhoods

Chapel Hill

Gus Kanarios says customer service is the key ingredient of success.

Gus' Chalet Serves the Greek Classics

Set among the national chain restaurants and "big-box" retailers of Chapel Hill Mall, Gus' Chalet has provided traditional Old World food and service for the past 30 years.

Owner Gus Kanarios, a native of Greece, has a simple recipe for his restaurant's success:

"Take care of your customers and the people that work for you. You can't take advantage of people. And you have to keep up with times."

Kanarios, 71, has a loyal clientele at his 175-seat restaurant, which features a mix of American standards and Greek specialties. Along with lamb shank, steaks, veal and fresh seafood, he offers homemade spanakopita (spinach strudel), stuffed grape leaves, saganaka (flaming cheese), moussaka and souvlaki.

A self-described "straight talker," Kanarios says he isn't concerned about competition from national chains. "If you serve quality food and price it right, you don't have to worry," he says.

Kanarios still puts in a full day at the restaurant, but has turned over chef duties to his son-in-law Kostas Galatoulas. The night chef is Frank Trepke.

"It's a family atmosphere," says Donna Powell, the restaurant's hostess and a 15-year employee. "We have customers that have been coming here for 30 years. They know they're going to get consistent quality."

Akron's watershed is home to wild turkeys (left), turtles (right), butterflies and deer (lower right).

Akron's Watershed Is Its Own

Water. You drink it every day, bathe in it, swim in it, use it to sprinkle your lawn and wash the family car.

But are you aware that you and your fellow residents actually lay claim to the veritable Garden of Eden that brings the water into homes and businesses?

Covering an impressive 207 square miles in Geauga and Portage counties, the Upper Cuyahoga River Watershed is a sloping expanse of land that collects precipitation and funnels it through dozens of creeks and streams into the Cuyahoga River, the primary source of public water for Akron.

During the past 80 years, the City of Akron has acquired about 19,000 acres of the watershed, which not only plays a vital role in collection and drainage of rain and snowfall, but also supports a wide range of recreational and ecological activities. Today, in fact, Akron is the largest landowner in Geauga County.

As the u-shaped Cuyahoga River flows south, west and north over its 100-mile course to Lake Erie, it feeds the city's four reservoirs, including Lake Rockwell, which is adjacent to the Akron Water Supply Plant in Franklin Township near Kent.

Each day, about 41 million gallons of raw water are withdrawn from Lake Rockwell for treatment and then pumped to 225,000 city customers and an additional 75,000 customers in Tallmadge, Stow, Fairlawn, Mogadore and several other communities.

"Most people just take it for granted that water will be there when they turn on their faucets," says Mike McGlinchy, Akron's Public Utilities Bureau manager. He oversees the city's water supply and distribution system. "The only time that people think about where their water comes from is when it's not there."

Building on an idea

Many northeast Ohioans, including Akron residents, don't know that the city owns about 12 percent of the Upper Cuyahoga River Watershed. While it may seem curious that the city owns large tracts of lands in neighboring counties, Kim C. Coy, Akron's watershed superintendent, explains that the visionary civic leaders of the early 1900s understood the importance of a high-quality, plentiful and cost-effective municipal water supply.

"Looking forward, they were able to determine that the construction of reservoirs and the development of an extensive surface water supply system would economically meet the needs of the present and into the future," Coy says.

A home for wildlife

Approximately one-third of the Upper Cuyahoga River Watershed is forested area and one-third is used for agricultural purposes, notes Coy, explaining that the city had two basic objectives for its land acquisitions. "The first reason was to build reservoirs that would temporarily store water that runs off the watershed," he says. "That allows us to treat water throughout the year."

The city's other reason in developing the watershed was to protect the quality of its water source. "The way that the watershed land is used is the dominant factor in the quality and quantity of our water supply," Coy says. "If left in its natural state, the watershed's vegetation serves an important role in absorbing much of the precipitation that would otherwise run off and overload streams, causing bank erosion."

To strengthen its important custodian role in preserving and managing the watershed, the city continues to acquire additional land, thus slowing or limiting development. "The amount of residential development in the watershed area is concerning us," says Coy, explaining that development creates impervious surfaces such as pavement and rooftops that can increase runoff.

Rain is welcomed by Utilities Bureau manager Mike McGlinchy (left) and watershed superintendent Kim Coy.

Frank Marino (below) ensures that Akron residents and customers receive high-quality drinking water.

Piece of Eden

By Robert Sberna

The natural vegetation that exists in undeveloped areas of the watershed also serves to filter out runoff contaminants, including phosphorus — a fertilizer component.

"When you intensively use or manage land, there's the possibility of putting out too much fertilizer, which can wash into streams and the river," Coy says. "The river has an assimilative capacity. It can withstand a certain amount of pollutants without being affected. However, if people overfertilize farms, improperly maintain septic systems or don't adequately manage wastewater treatment plans, it will increase the pollutants that can be released back into river. That increased amount of pollution resulting from man's activity is what overextends the river's natural assimilative capacity."

Crediting city officials for their efforts in supporting watershed management, Coy says: "We have a very strong reputation for protecting our water supply. One of the consequences of our protective and restrictive watershed usage policies is that the area has a huge capacity for wildlife."

A natural feature of the watershed is the rich abundance of spongy wetlands, which filter sediment and other impurities, acting like natural dikes against fluctuating water levels. These wetlands also provide a habitat for beaver, mink, deer, raccoons, coyotes, fox, geese, turkeys and American bald eagles.

"For the past 10 years, a bald eagle has made a home at Lake Rockwell," Coy notes. "We have many different species of birds, butterflies, insects, and flora and fauna. In fact, researchers from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History visit the watershed to locate and identify different plants and animals."

The watershed also provides complementary activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing and boating (non-gasoline). Coy adds that about 25 miles of the Upper Cuyahoga River Watershed has been designated as a state scenic river by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

The city's efforts to protect its water supply are continually evolving. "Since the events of September 11, 2001, we've enhanced our security systems in many ways," Coy says. "In recent years, we've implemented new types of protection against possible threats to the city's water supply. And we'll continue to develop our safeguards."

Mike McGlinchy notes that water department employees regularly attend workshops and seminars to learn the latest treatment techniques. "As time goes on, people expect their water to get purer and purer," he says. "That's a part of what the state and federal Environmental Protection Agencies are mandating. The water today is a lot purer than it was 20 years ago."

How can consumers help to ensure the quality and quantity of the public water supply?

"The biggest cause of water wastage is a running toilet," says Dan Marino, water distribution superintendent. "It's important to maintain toilets and faucets. If your toilet is always running, you're throwing water away and contributing to an increase in demand."

Marino says that fertilizer runoff is a major culprit in water contamination. He suggests that homeowners and lawn-care workers use approved fertilizer sprays with a backflow check valve. "Everyone should be respectful of our water source," Marino says. "Contamination of the water supply increases the cost of purifying the water. The higher the quality of the water in the river and the reservoirs, the less we have to treat it."

Akron's Water Supply by the Numbers

10.5 billion gallons of water (on average) stored in Akron's four reservoirs

41 million gallons of water treated and pumped each day to customers

320,000 people who depend on the city's water supply

92,000 households that use city water

2,000 gallons (average amount of water each consumer uses per month)

One cent (approximate cost per gallon of city water)

1,100 miles (cumulative length of Akron's water mains)

8 glasses (recommended amount of water you should drink each day)

This is A

NBA Rookie of the Year LeBron James returned to one of his basketball "homes," the Ed Davis Community Center in West Akron, in May to present a $75,000 gift from the NIKE corporation to the City of Akron to refurbish the indoor basketball court. This gift and others will allow the City of Akron to redo four indoor courts in Akron and several outdoor courts as well. Neighborhood children joined LeBron at the hoop as the Akron basketball star prepared to represent the United States at the Olympic Games this summer in Athens, Greece.

Artist Michael Gearhart continues to paint the town red, as well as white, blue, brown, green and every other color. The local muralist, whose work decorates two downtown buildings, is working on murals to cover the historic Richard Howe house at East Exchange and High Street that will become the offices for the Ohio-Erie Canal Corridor Coalition.

Lock 3 Live! held its own version of the "Akron Idol" competition over the July 4 weekend on the FirstEnergy stage. Cory Turner of Tallmadge High School (right) won first place. Fans (above) were vocal in their support of contestants over the two-day competition. Other "stars" in the show included Diamond Norment (far right), Shannon Houser (center) and John Outley, III (left).

Photos by Mickey Stefanik

AKRON

Photos by Bruce Ford

United Rubber Workers History was remembered over the Memorial Day weekend with a bicentennial marker (upper left) commemorating the 1930s sit-down strikes. Retired URW president Milan Stone (above left) unveiled the plaque. From the John S. Knight Center, a hundred URW families participated in a "Solidarity Walk" (above) to the Summacare building at Main and Market, where a second historic event was remembered — the founding of the URW at the old Portage Hotel in 1935. The path in the Commemorative Garden contains bricks remembering URW members of the past. Retired URW Local 2 president Doug Werstler (left) and URW veteran Art Minson (right).

The Birthplace of Alcoholics Anonymous received a $25,000 gift from the people of Akron, as Hank Lynch (below left), president of Stan Hywet, accepts a $25,000 check from Mayor Don Plusquellic. The Gate Lodge at North Portage Path and Garman Road is a "shrine" to worldwide members of AA, who were able to enter the small home for the first time on Founders' Day weekend in June. Stan Hywet has preserved the place where Henrietta Seiberling introduced AA founders Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith.

Photos by Mickey Stefanik

The Fourth of July attracted upwards of 70,000 people to downtown Akron with a weekend "Akron Family Barbeque" that featured rides for smaller children (upper left), a shower of confetti (lower left), and the county's largest display of fireworks. The internationally known "Black Keys" celebrated a homecoming at Lock 3 Live!. The duo of Patrick Carney and Dan Auerbach are Firestone High graduates.

Wearing traditional garb of coal mining guilds, youth bands lead the parade marking the start of Weihnachten in Chemnitz.

Akron Meets Chemnitz, Germany, in Winter Festival Celebration

The Chemnitz Weihnachtsmarkt attracts 100,000 people from all over Eastern Europe during the 30 days before the city's celebration of Christmas. Vendors sell their hand-made wares from cottages that the City of Akron will duplicate for the 2004 Downtown Winter Festival.

The City of Akron will bring a little bit of Germany to Lock 3 Park this holiday season, featuring ice skating, food specialties, and handmade goods from the region around Akron's sister-city, Chemnitz, Germany.

On Saturday, November 27, the annual "Welcome Santa" parade, sponsored by the city's Bureau of Recreation, will launch a month of activities in Downtown Akron. The Burgermeister of Chemnitz, Detlef Nonnen, will serve as grand marshal of the parade, and will assist Mayor Plusquellic in opening a first-ever Downtown Akron Winter Festival at Lock 3 Park that will include a 60' x 80' ice skating rink, complete with Zamboni; and a traditional "chriskindl market" sponsored by the Civic Theatre, similar to seasonal festivals that are famous throughout Germany.

Akron began its sister-city relationship with Chemnitz in 1996, and since that time, officials from both cities have exchanged visits and looked for ways to spur economic development in each other's regions. The Downtown Winter Festival will be the first time Chemnitz merchants have come to Akron to display and sell hand-made wares popular throughout Germany.

City of Chemnitz leaders welcome their Akron counterparts. Lord Mayor Peter Seifert (second from right) and Burgermeister (Deputy Mayor) Detlef Nonnen (right) greet Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic and Deputy Mayor David Lieberth (left) outside the city's cultural complex, which includes the art museum and theaters.

Old Chemnitz with its huge, drab apartment buildings erected during the communist era (rear of photo) has become The New Chemnitz – modern, colorful apartments with balconies and penthouses (front of photo).

Chemnitz, like most European cities, takes great pride in its 200-year old buildings that continue to serve the city as homes and restaurants.

Capacity crowds have marked the 2004 season at Lock 3 Live! in downtown Akron.
LOCK 3 LIVE!
FIRSTENERGY STAGE
The Akron District Marbles Tournament was held over Memorial Day.
2004 AKRON MARBLES CHAMPION
The Gospel Fest opened the season, followed by the "Greased Lightning" Classic Car and Truck Show on South Main Street that included an Elvis impersonation contest and dancin' in the street.
The Homegrown Saturday Mornin' farmers' market continues 9am-2pm on Saturdays through September.

History

Wendell LaDue, Visionary

Raise your glass to the father of the watershed

By Dave Lieberth

A visitor from Akron to Denver, Phoenix or San Francisco is genuinely amused when he is welcomed to a hotel with an admonishment to conserve water. Water is now, has always been and will long be one of our city's greatest assets.

Akron sits astride one of the largest sources of fresh water in the world. That said, Akron residents are the beneficiaries of the engineering marvels required to store water, treat it for drinking, then distribute it underground. When we open a tap in our kitchen, we can take it for granted.

No single individual had a greater impact on the design and development of Akron's water supply than Wendell LaDue. Born before the turn of the 20th century, he earned a doctor's degree before moving to Akron in 1917. He went to work as a draftsman at the City Water Works (at a salary of $20 a week) in a decade when the city's population was exploding – tripling between 1910 and 1920.

In 1911, voters approved a plan to buy the privately owned Akron Water Works Company, which supplied water to homes and growing businesses – although the stuff that came out of the spigot was often brown and sometimes contained small fish and polliwogs! So unreliable was the distribution of their water from Summit Lake that the flow petered out before fires were fought. And then there was a nasty annual tradition of typhoid fever.

LaDue came to town just after the city had acquired 2,000 acres of land in the watershed of the upper Cuyahoga and was rejoicing in the fresh water coming from its new reservoir at Lake Rockwell in Portage County – named for the Akron mayor who had presided over its construction.

Perhaps more than any other individual, Wendell LaDue had a vision for the future of Akron that stretched well into the 21st century. He saw the growing need for water, not just for the city, but for its neighbors. As chief engineer, he oversaw the Works Progress Administration jobs that would create the East Branch Reservoir in Geauga County and a second watershed for industrial water at Mogadore.

At the time of his retirement in 1963, more than 10,000 acres of land had been placed under city control; at LaDue's insistence, the city had planted hundreds of thousands of trees to conserve the spectacular natural beauty of the area.

"He was a demanding boss," says David Crandell, who met LaDue as a student at North High School and was persuaded by LaDue to turn his engineering talents to water supply management. Crandell recalls, "He expected his people to perform or else..." Nevertheless, Crandell adds, "he was fair and attracted outstanding people to his staff." Crandell was manager of the Public Utilities Bureau from 1975 to 2002.

At his death at 91, Wendell LaDue was hailed as a visionary — not only did Akron hail his efforts, but he was recognized across the nation and around the world. He visited 82 countries on behalf of the U.S. State Department, and for many years, Dr. LaDue worked with the University of Akron to bring hundreds of engineers to Akron from Third World countries to learn the ins and outs of storing, treating and distributing water. The American Water Works Association, of which he was president, remembers his legacy even today with its annual LaDue Award that recognizes distinguished water safety programs.

Strolling the Grounds, Feeling at Home

By Russ Musarra/Illustration by Chuck Ayers

"Stroll around the grounds until you feel at home…"

That line from a Simon and Garfunkel song came to mind as we admired the hilltop acreage surrounding the Perkins Stone Mansion, at 550 Copley Road. We did feel at home as we searched for ways to showcase the home of the Summit County Historical Society during its 80th anniversary celebration.

Chuck Ayers found the view he was looking for under the century-old white beech that grows just west of the mansion. There, the windmill-topped washhouse building, housing the Mutton Hill Gift Shop, was nicely framed by the entrance to the Pockrandt Visitor Center — with a canopy of beech leaves above and the mansion's white columns on the right.

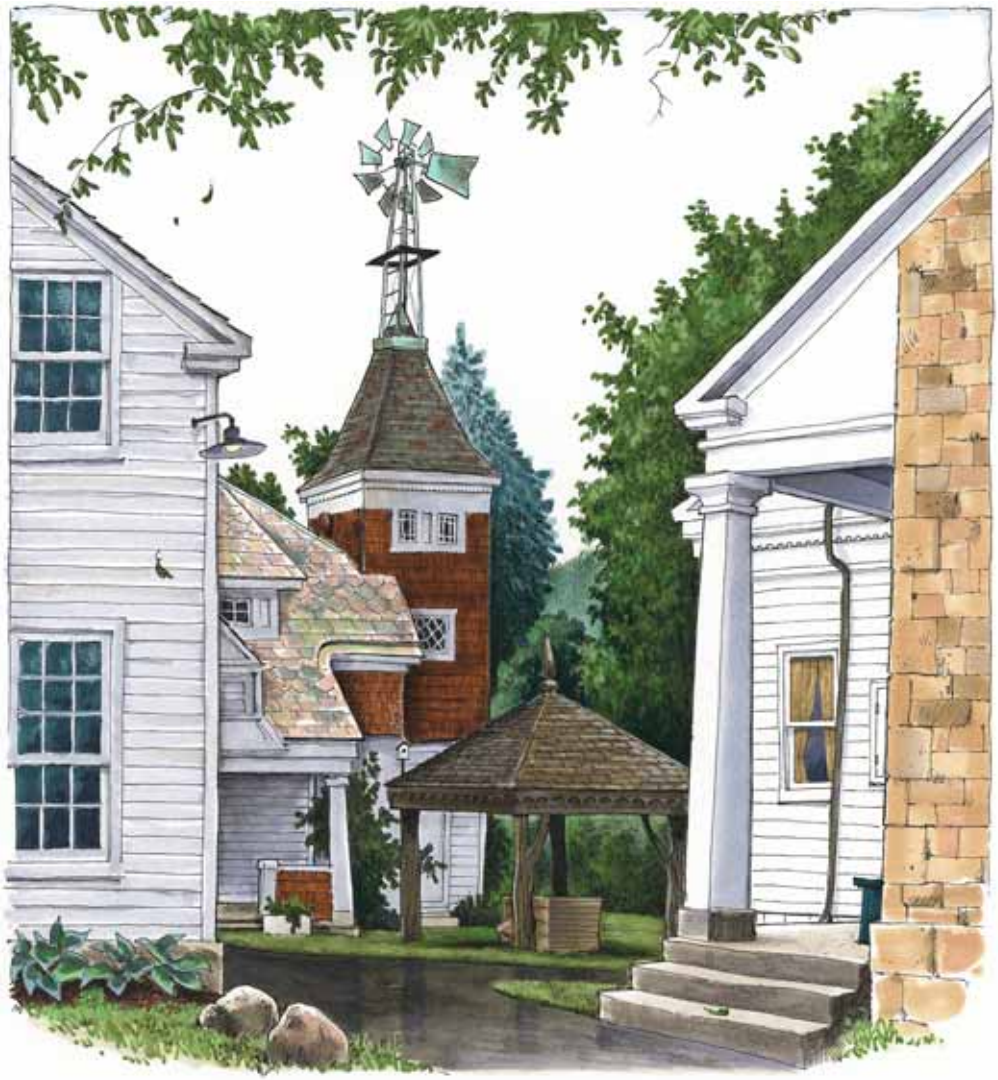
While Ayers sketched the scene, I admired the lush hosta, in borders along the drive and on the mansion's south side. Then I examined a metal sign tacked on the trunk of the beech:

White Beech
Over 100
Years Old

Another sign, posted on the trunk of a magnificent cypress, states unequivocally:

Largest cypress
tree in Ohio
Planted by
Col. Geo. T. Perkins
in 1866
70 feet high
13 feet around

That planting took place a year after Akron became a city and 31 years after Perkins and his bride, the former Grace Ingersoll Tod, moved from Warren to a farmhouse, at what is now Diagonal and Copley roads, and began building their mansion. The cypress, like the mansion itself, is a symbol of the city's history — as is the farmhouse, once home to abolitionist John Brown and later the clubhouse at Akron's first golf course.



A sign at the visitor center says that tours are conducted Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 12:30 and 2 p.m. Cost is $5; for senior citizens and children, $4.

At the center, we picked up the historical society's newsletter, *Portage Trail Review*. It offers details about the first-ever Rubber City Road Rally. You can learn more about the August race by logging onto *www.rubbercityroadrally.com.*

Artist Chuck Ayers and writer Russ Musarra began their series of essays, based on walks around the community, in March 1987 in the Akron Beacon Journal's *Sunday magazine. Ayers, a former* Beacon Journal *artist and editorial cartoonist, created the comic strip "Crankshaft" with Tom Batiuk. Musarra has combined his interests in history and writing into a career spanning 48 years, including reporting duties at both the* Beacon Journal *and the now-defunct* Cleveland Press.

Around the Town

The Tangier Today Is a Reinvented Classic

By Robert Sberna

Ed George Jr.

Since 1959, the Tangier Restaurant has been a landmark institution in Akron, perhaps best known as a venue for special events. Today, owner Ed George Jr. points to the Tangier's recent renovations as a draw for the contemporary lunch and dinner crowds.

"People look to us for events such as corporate seminars, proms and retirement parties," George says. "But instead of just coming here on special occasions, we want people to come for dining. We have an excellent chef, Damon Mangano, and our meals are competitively priced."

Covering 65,000 square feet, the Tangier offers 11 separate rooms, including a 400-seat showroom and a grand ballroom that can accommodate 1,000.

George acknowledges that the Tangier's size and scope have presented some challenges. "We are one of the few remaining huge supper-club venues," he says. "In the old days, you could be everything to everybody. We were a hot property. But now the Akron area is oversaturated with restaurants. And people have changed their drinking habits and eating habits. Many of our old-time customers now live in Florida six months a year. One of our challenges is how to market the Tangier," he says.

George says he's confident that there will always be demand for good customer service and hospitality. Along with a new dining room, George has implemented some menu changes, including a lunch buffet from Tuesday through Friday.

"There's lots of places where you can get a good steak, but people want a dining experience. That's what we offer at the Tangier. We're kind of like Las Vegas without a casino."

Throughout its history, the Tangier has hosted many nationally known entertainers. This fall and winter, the Tangier's entertainment director Freddy Salem has scheduled a jazz and blues series as well as several touring bands, including the Spinners, the Whispers, War and Donnie Iris & the Cruisers. "This will be our best concert season ever," he promises.

Akron's Champions

Leonard Foster, president of Northern Ohio Golf Charities (NOGC).

NEC Invitational Makes Sure Green Stretches to Nonprofits

By Robert Sberna

While only one golfer takes home the NEC Invitational trophy each year, the tournament's big winners are the area nonprofit groups supported by the Northern Ohio Golf Charities Foundation.

"We're not a big foundation, but we take all the money that we derive and put it right back in the community," says Leonard Foster, president of Northern Ohio Golf Charities (NOGC). "Some of the organizations that we support are quite dependent on us. For example, the Women's Board of Children's Hospital buys medical equipment each year with the money that we provide."

Since 1954, Firestone Country Club has hosted professional golf tournaments, starting with the Rubber City Open. Succeeding tournaments included the American Golf Classic, World Series of Golf, CBS Golf Classic and the NEC Invitational, one of the inaugural World Golf Championships.

Foster explains that the NOGC (formerly known as Akron Golf Charities) has existed for nearly as long as professional golf in Akron. "I've been blessed to be involved with the charitable component of the tournament for nearly 20 years," Foster says. "The tournaments are really about supporting the charities."

Along with its direct benefit to charitable organizations, the NEC Invitational generates approximately $35-$40 million in economic impact for the Akron community, says Tom Strong, the tournament's executive director.

He explains that the 120,000 people who attend the tournament each year provide a significant boost for area hotels, restaurants and other businesses.

Noting that the annual NEC Invitational requires about 18 months of planning, Strong says that the tournament is committed to Firestone, at least until 2006. "It means a lot to the community to have the event here," he says. "The bottom line is that we have to continue to put our best foot forward."

Foster adds that Akron's 50-year legacy of professional golf is indicative of the community's strength and sense of civic responsibility. Each year, more than 1,000 volunteers offer their services to the NEC Invitational, he says, adding, "That amount of support makes me feel warm and good to be an Akron resident."

Each year, the NEC Invitational generates about $1 million for the Northern Ohio Golf Charities Foundation, which distributes the proceeds to 40 or so charities, including the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce, Akron Urban League, First Tee of Akron, Summit County Historical Society, Beacon Journal Charity Fund and Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron.

The Town Crier

by Russ Musarra

When a doctor asked ARLIE DAVIS how many 470-pound 60-year-olds he knew, Davis, an operations and maintenance technician for the Akron Water Pollution Control Division, couldn't think of any. That was four years ago, before Davis underwent gastric bypass surgery to begin his journey to better health.

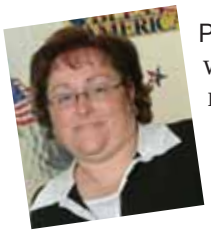
Today, at 42, he has shed 215 pounds. He weighs 255. His waist has gone from 54 inches to 36 inches. His shirt size has dropped from 5X to 2X. All this represents 75 percent of his goal.

"I'm still working at it," Davis says. "I eat smaller quantities. I eat healthier."

Davis, who weighed 175 pounds when he graduated from North High, says he realized his life was in jeopardy at 470 pounds.

"This called for extreme measures," he says. "I wanted to be around for my three children and my wife, Kimberly. She has been such a help. She married me when I weighed 470."

STRONG, HELPING HANDS



When Mayor DON PLUSQUELLIC asked city workers to help families of military personnel serving in Iraq, scores stepped forward to mow lawns, to repair roof gutters, leaky pipes, and to handle myriad ongoing household tasks, reports DAWN EVANS, Health Department secretary, who coordinates the Office of Military Assistance.

Evans' all-volunteer assistance crew numbers 65 fellow employees. This corps collected enough books, magazines, candy, snacks, toiletries and other personal items that it cost $1,300 in postage to ship packages — weighing 20 to 45 pounds each — to our men and women serving in Iraq. The program will continue as long as there's a need, Evans says. Families of service personnel may contact Evans at 330-375-2025.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

A highway maintenance supervisor, a Fire Department lieutenant, an Economic Development secretary and a customer service specialist took bows March through June as Akron employees of the month.

March honoree NORMAN "BO" VOGELSONG joined the City of Akron Highway Maintenance Division as a laborer in June 1966. Four months later, he was in Vietnam, where he served three years in the Army and was wounded. Vogelsong is described as a responsible worker who really enjoys his job and has never lost his enthusiasm. He and Lisa, his wife of 35 years, have a daughter, Kathy, who is a radio and TV host.

Lt. RONALD BREZNAK, April's honoree, manages the Fire Department Accounting and Services Bureau, which oversees the budget, financial planning, personnel records and fire-related reporting and records, research and development, equipment specifications and design, product testing and purchasing. He also is part of the Akron Fire Department HazMat Response Team and the Summit County HazMat Response Team, serving as a zone coordinator for each team. He joined the department in January 1985 as a firefighter/medic and was promoted to lieutenant in April 1996. Breznak and Janet, his wife of 21 years, live in Goodyear Heights and are the parents of 20-year-old son Kyle and 13-year-old twins Sabrina and Tony.

May honoree MARCIA STALLWORTH has such an aptitude for computers that she is frequently called upon to help the mayor's office and other offices with computer-related issues. Stallworth, a secretary in the Mayor's Office of Economic Development since August 1993, is responsible for support services. She worked in the Akron Law Department from March 1986 to May 1989, when she moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where her husband, Ernest Stallworth, attended divinity school. Today, he is pastor of Messiah Missionary Baptist Church. Her primary focus, mentoring children, prompted her to implement growth and development programs, including Girl Let's Talk, Children of Excellence and Miss Manners. She also enjoys spending time with her adult children, Ernest and J.R., and her grandson, Ernesto.

HAROLD SCHUMACHER, June's honoree, draws on more than 30 years' experience as a Public Utilities Bureau Business Services Division customer service worker in his duties assisting Honeywell with the installation of the city's new meter-reading system. Schumacher signed on as a seasonal employee in 1973, became a permanent employee as a water maintenance worker on May 15, 1974,and was promoted to crew leader three years later. Since then, he has worked in all areas of water distribution and has been a temporary foreman, yard foreman and an inspector. Schumacher and his wife, Linda, have a daughter, Colleen, son, Kevin, and granddaughter, Ann.

Akron City

Zinnias Bloom All Over Town

Akron residents took the challenge we put to them seriously in our May-August *CITY* magazine, and put the free packets of zinnia seeds to good use. Keep Akron Beautiful has had a great response from homeowners who planted the seeds and sent in their photos.

If you have Akron zinnias in bloom, take a photo and send it to Keep Akron Beautiful, 850 E. Market St. Akron, OH 44305, or e-mail your digital photos to *KeepAkronBeautiful@ci.akron.oh.us.*

Be sure to include your name and address and any comments you have about the flower project.

We'll include as many photos as possible in the 2005 calendar, to be published in December.

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