

A black and white photograph of a brick building with a curved walkway and columns. The building is made of brick and has a curved walkway with a low brick wall. There are several columns supporting the walkway. The sky is clear and the lighting is bright, creating strong shadows.

East Village

Magazine

January 2017

Photograph by Edwin D. Custer

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Editorial

Launching 2017 with some journalistic drama

By Jan Worth-Nelson

By any standards, 2016 was a year of high drama in Flint and in the country. At *East Village Magazine*, we are taking many deep breaths. We are trying to make sense of everything that's happened. We are attempting to move forward with a clear vision and renewed energy for serving the community that is our home.

In the process, we are launching 2017 with a little drama of our own. This is the largest *EVM* we've ever published – 16 pages – and our first piece of “long-form” journalism, a special section starting on p. 8.

That piece, researched and written by our newest writer, Harold C. Ford, is based on an interview conducted by Harold and me with former Flint Mayor Dayne Walling, a resident of the College Cultural neighborhood and obviously a key controversial player in the water crisis. At the dining room table of his quiet 1927 colonial, his rescue dog Bruno nestled at our feet, Walling gave us two and a half hours of his time on a snowy December day.

Many questions propelled us. We wanted to know not just about his role in the water crisis, but about his life growing up in Flint, his education and his path to a position that embroiled him as mayor from Day One in one of the biggest challenges to the city of Flint in its history. Who is Dayne Walling? What drives him? And what does he have to say about the controversies that swamped him as the water crisis unfolded? We had other questions, too, about his relationship with the water warriors, the emergency managers, state and federal officials, and, as we dug into the history more deeply, the Karegnondi Water Authority (KWA) pipeline.

The interview was, at times, difficult. Walling has had a tough year. Within two weeks after Karen Weaver defeated him in a bruising campaign at the end of a tumultuous year, his father died. He has applied for several jobs unsuccessfully, but has done consulting based on his wide political experience and hopes to do more. After a life devoted to public service, he clearly is grappling with a seemingly tarnished reputation. He appeared tired that

day but still was willing to articulate his regrets and to offer quiet, ruminative defenses of his actions in the turbulent months of 2011 to 2015.

We were exhausted after the interview. We went straight back to my house and drank whiskey. But it felt profoundly important to us to hear Walling's story, to think about the complexities around the water crisis, and attempt to explain and share elements of his role – fairly and factually, we hope – with you. As with so many aspects of the water crisis, Dayne Walling's story is complicated and unfinished. A special thanks to Harold Ford for his exhaustive research and commitment to the facts. We're proud to have him on board.

Meanwhile, other stories just keep coming. Also in this edition is an interview with longtime Clio resident Henry Hatter, one of the 16 Michigan electors who brought us Donald Trump. His story, we think you will agree, is compelling, with deep Flint roots and ideas that may challenge yours. They are not our views, but we respect his right to express himself.

This edition also features Paul Rozycki's usual penetrating punditry, and a story about the Flint Fresh Mobile Market – a community partnership that may represent something Flint is getting good at. Finally, I've ceded my Village Life column this time to a guest columnist, Flint writer Connor Coyne, who describes a rather frightening but eye-opening experience on a road trip from Chicago.

As I wrap this up, I'm reminded of a saying by the late Shelly Kopp in his wonderful 43-item “Eschatological Laundry List.” Item 20 goes like this: “All evil is potential vitality in need of transformation.” We've got some transformation to undertake. We can do it together, day by day, here at home, with the resilience that we know keeps our beleaguered Flint hearts beating. So, onward to this new and nerve-racking year. Let's live it out with audacious hope, beyond all reason.

Jan Worth-Nelson is the editor of East Village Magazine. She can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

Cover: Woodside Church



Photograph by Edwin D. Custer

Photo of the Month: Top of the Pavilion

Commentary

What's the new normal for 2016 and 2017?

By Paul Rozycki

Looking back on 2016, it is strange how quickly the abnormal became normal.

One of the most worrisome aspects of the Flint Water Crisis is how normal certain things have become. I've gotten used to having the house littered with water bottles and having cases of water piled all over the kitchen. I'm used to changing filters every week or so. I'm used to picking up a carload of water every few weeks. I'm used to planting a huge trash bag full of empty plastic bottles at the curb every recycling week. I'm used to not drinking the tap water.

I've gotten so used to all this that I have a hard time breaking the habit. When I go to a friend's home outside of Flint, I wonder where the water bottles are. I hesitate when drinking water elsewhere. At the movies in Flint Township last week, I had to remind myself that, "It's OK to stop at the drinking fountain. We're not in the city." And that's the problem. None of these things should be normal. But they have become normal. When you do anything long enough it starts to seem normal – even things that shouldn't be normal and things we wouldn't have accepted as normal just a few years ago.

Similarly, before 2016, how many people would have thought it normal to have serious presidential candidates calling each other names, bragging about their sex lives, insulting veterans, minorities, women, the handicapped and the media? Under normal condi-

tions, what would be the chances of that candidate being elected to anything, much less the presidency? So many things that were truly bizarre and offensive during last year's presidential campaign are now, unfortunately, being accepted as the "new normal".

As we move into the new year, there are more than a few things from 2016 that have become normal, that shouldn't be accepted as normal in 2017.

The "new normal" for Flint?

It shouldn't be normal to have new criminal charges regularly filed against local officials who are blamed for the water crisis.

It shouldn't be normal to regularly hear that "the water is getting better, but keep using your filters," after almost three years of bad water.

It shouldn't be normal to face endless court battles over how to deliver water to a city in crisis.

It shouldn't be normal to have new misgivings and doubts about a nearly completed Karegnondi Pipeline, that promised to deliver clean, affordable water to Flint and Genesee County.

It shouldn't be normal to have almost every recent Flint mayor face recall attempts from unhappy voters, dissatisfied with city hall's efforts and actions.

It shouldn't be normal to have the city council meetings regularly disrupted with loud outbursts, threats and arrests of council

members.

It shouldn't be normal to learn that the same filters that remove lead might also increase the chance for bacterial infection in our water.

It shouldn't be normal to have two opposing trash companies playing bumper-tag on the city streets as they attempt to get the edge for a city contract, amidst charges of insider dealing.

The "new normal" for the nation?

On the presidential level, the list of "new normal" is even more troubling.

It shouldn't be normal for a candidate to lose the popular vote by almost 3 million votes, and win the electoral vote.

It shouldn't be normal for a candidate to insult much of the American population and then call for unity.

It shouldn't be normal for a candidate to urge a foreign government to hack into the emails of another party. It also shouldn't be normal for a government to do it.

It shouldn't be normal for a president-elect to threaten a nuclear buildup in a fleeting 140-character tweet.

It shouldn't be normal for a presidential candidate to tweet a hostile response to every late-night comedian's skit or joke.

It shouldn't be normal for a president-elect to act as if he were president, months before he's actually sworn in.

In an age when more communication

(Continued on Page 6.)

Local presidential elector with deep Flint roots says Trump will help Blacks

By Jan Worth-Nelson

The first Republican Henry Hatter knew was his uncle from Davison – a “prosperous-looking” man with a gold tooth and a pocket full of quarters for the kids. “He was generous and he was easy to love,” Hatter, now a youthful 80, recalls with a smile. When his uncle came around to the family home in Flint, Hatter remembers, his mother would say, “There’s a Republican.”



Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Henry Hatter at the historic Begole House in Flint owned by Joe Rundell

Later, as a high school student, he went downtown with mostly white kids for a parade honoring Dwight D. Eisenhower, and the president stopped and shook his hand – the black kid. It was a moment he never forgot, Hatter said. “That was profound for me.”

“I knew what racism was but I didn’t equate it with myself,” Hatter said of those early years. “I wasn’t struggling. I was as successful as any white child.”

In the decades since, Hatter has forged his way through countless accomplishments. He was a top student at Clark, Whittier, and Central High schools. He was named a distinguished alumnus from both Central State and Saginaw Valley State. He earned a master’s degree in physical science from Eastern Michigan University, took classes in engineering at Purdue University and Kettering University (then GMI), and retired in 2000 after a 38-year top-level engineering career at General Motors.

He raised three children who have gone on to equally impressive careers, and has devoted himself tirelessly to community causes for education and health care. He has served on numerous boards, including 26 years so far on the Clio Area School District Board of Education.

And on Dec. 19, Hatter experienced

another milestone and “awe-inspiring” moment, when he cast his vote for Donald Trump at the State Capital as one of Michigan’s 16 electors – the elector representing Flint’s 5th Congressional District.

A Clio resident for 55 years, Hatter was joined in Lansing by his three children and his great friend Joe Rundell, a Flint sculptor, gun engraver, historian and fellow Trump supporter.

It was a big day for the whole family. Hatter’s daughter, Kelly Mitchell, now of Grand Rapids and a member of the Trump transition team, also cast an electoral vote for Trump – a father-daughter historical first that drew national attention.

Through the years, starting with support for fellow Central HS alum Don Riegle during his first congressional campaign, Hatter worked his way up through Republican circles, serving as secretary, vice-chairman and president of the Genesee County party.

Hatter had cast an elector’s vote once before – for Gerald Ford in 1976 – a decidedly more sedate affair, when people hardly noticed. He was accompanied that time by his wife and mother, now both deceased. He said he felt “accomplished” and is grateful that his wife, who died in 2013, got to share the moment with him.

This year, obviously, was different. This time, Hatter received so many letters to his home urging him not to vote for Donald Trump the mail carrier started dropping them off in bins – five mail bins full by the end. He figures there are thousands, which he is storing in a trunk for posterity. They arrived handwritten, typed, or as printed-off emails. There were postcards and even Christmas cards.

Most of them he read – mainly looking for threats, and he said only a handful came close. GOP leaders advised not responding to any of them, but Hatter said he did reply to one, a writer he complimented for his respectful approach and logic. After the vote, the Hatter family delivered gifts to their mail carriers: chocolates, thank-you cards, and a banner for the wall.

The protestors this year at the State Capitol didn’t bother him, he said. Like most of the letter writers, they were respectful and he never felt physically threatened. “They were only using words – they just tried to browbeat us mentally,” he said. But he and his daughter were unpersuaded, and if any of the others were, their vote didn’t change.

The electors met inside before voting with Ronna Romney McDaniel, chair of the Michigan Republican Party, Mitt Romney’s niece and Trump’s pick to be the National RNC Chair. Hatter said the conversation

was not about the protests, but all positive, all celebrating the outcome of the election and the opportunities presented.

Hatter said neither he nor his daughter ever had a doubt that Trump was their man. As a self-described non-partisan who had supported Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court but also Jesse Jackson for president years ago, Hatter said he believes not just the Republican Party but Washington, D.C. itself needs a shake-up, and in his view Trump fits the bill.

“Donald Trump opened my eyes,” Hatter said. And he says he actually liked Trump’s “bullying voice.”

“You know what I saw him kicking at?”

He didn’t say anything to blacks. Nobody saw that. He was after the white man – the rich white man. He was eating them up left and right. Who talks that way to rich people? He’s somebody who could stand up to the greatest powers that there are.”

When Hatter was selected this time, at the state GOP convention last August, he was already solidly in the Trump camp. One of a field of eight 5th District candidates for the job, Hatter said he told his GOP colleagues he was “going to support the Republicans in black communities, and to seek out the segments of people left behind – young black men and old white men” especially.

He particularly thought about “the old white men,” describing them as “people who had been excoriated by blacks, by women, by Democrats.” He said he wanted to seek their help in re-establishing dominance in the Republican Party.

“These were the ones who wanted something different,” he said, people who didn’t want to see any more of a world that is “given to you with the left hand and taken back with the right hand and you end up with nothing – for years and years.”

(In a follow-up email, Hatter said that he wanted to clarify the phrase “old white man” or “ole white man” as a non-discriminatory depiction of a segment of the voting population. In fact, he noted, former President Bill Clinton had used the phrase recently, claiming that the “angry old white man” was who had tipped the election to Donald Trump.)

Hatter’s story, from childhood to the 5th Congressional District responsibility he carried out last month, suggests once again that nothing about the 2016 election, or about Trump supporters, is easy to categorize.

Born in 1935 in Livingston, Alabama, Hatter was 7 when his sharecropper family became part of the great wartime migration and moved to Flint. At first, they nestled in with his maternal grandmother, who

(Continued on Page 6.)

... Hatter

(Continued from Page 5.)

lived at 208 E. 13th St., in the old neighborhood on Harrison near the already well-known Golden Leaf Club.

"There were jobs and we got out of poverty," he said. His father got work in the foundry at Buick, and his mother worked as a domestic for the A.M. Davison family,

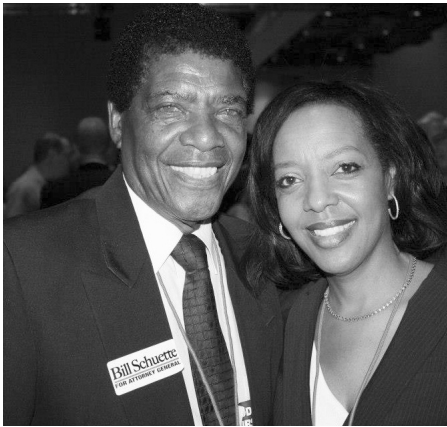


Photo by DarKen Photography

History-making electors: Hatter with daughter Kelly Mitchell

scions of a now long-gone downtown department store.

His mother's connection with the Davison family, along with the Skaff and C.S. Mott families who sometimes hired her for special occasions, brought many pluses to the family, which had grown to 11 children. Her wealthy employers passed along outgrown clothes – beautiful shirts, he recalls, with maybe just a little fraying at the collar.

And the Hatters often enjoyed leftovers from society events. "We always ate well," he said.

Hatter's six uncles, Army veterans just back from the war, got together and started the first black cab company in Flint – called "Your Cab Company," with headquarters at Harrison and Clifford. Everybody worked together well, he said, and they became a prominent and well-off Flint family.

Propelled by a loan from the uncles, the Hatters bought a house on Maybury Street off Lippincott – the neighborhood was "pristine back in the day," he said. He picked up everything and anything he could read, sometimes well into the night until his mother called him out, sometimes sitting on the bank of Thread Lake, dipping his feet into the water while plowing through Tom Sawyer, all the Shakespeare plays, anything he could get his hands on.

In the interview, Hatter clarified he does not want to be called an African American.

"I was born here. I wasn't born in Africa," he said. All my blood was mixed here – the Irish, all the rest," he said, and when the interviewer noted that Hatter has blue eyes, he said, "I am a new man. I am

not part of any old culture. All my family were born here and if we were asked to leave, where would we go?"

Hatter's decision to be a Republican, he wrote in a follow-up email, is rooted not just in his life experiences from childhood on but in reading and thinking about black history and his belief that African Americans "should have achieved parity as the United States peaked as a world superpower," but have not. In particular, he said he studied events between the Depression and the year 2000, including the rise of the black middle class. He contended several major institutions, including academia, the press and the Department of Labor have created impediments to black American professionals, in particular, investing in the country's institutions and controlling crime within their communities.

To those who asked – including journalists and others – if Donald Trump is a racist, Hatter firmly replied, "no more so than anybody else standing around me in this room."

And, chuckling as he commented that he sometimes finds himself "a lobbyist for white people," he said, "The white man may have been the problem, but still, politically, you have to keep him a player, because you can never have stability without The Man. He will do you in."

Asked to affirm that that was his belief, he said, "That's traditionally what people believe – people of color."

"You can't move forward without the white man?" he was asked.

"They [people of color] know that's true. But also ... he controls."

He said one day during the campaign, as he sat on a street corner with Trump signs, another black man approached. The man said, "Why you voting for Trump? He doesn't know black people, he's never been around black people."

Hatter said he replied, "What did he do to make you so afraid of him? He's not yelling at the black man or black woman. He's yelling at power and privilege. You don't have any of those, do you?" He said the man drove off.

In a follow-up email, Hatter wrote that he hopes Trump will "expand, inspire and enable Black Americans through equal opportunity, without latent barriers or fluff, to pursue." He said he is not sure how that will happen, but he thinks the shakeup is good for blacks, and good for America, introducing what he hopes will be "a whole new era of self-reliance."

In any event, Hatter said, "I always tell black people, it's the Constitution that protects you." He added, "I hope we become a country that's capable of preserving itself." For him, that means a lengthy tradition of checks and balances and hewing to Constitutional rights. He said he believes that even if Trump has "character flaws" he

will bring something to the country it needs.

"Black people should never be intimidated by people who use big voices and stuff like that because we've heard that all our lives," he said. "So you just go with the man who says he's got a big stick and he will change things for you. That's what Donald Trump says: what do you have to lose?"

Asked, "and you liked that?" Hatter said, "Yeah, I did. He didn't offend me. He never offended me. But now maybe he can be nicer."

EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

... Commentary

(Continued from Page 4.)

avenues are available to us than ever before, it shouldn't be normal for "fake news" to have a greater impact than the real events and news of the day.

It shouldn't be normal to have such a blatant disregard for real facts, that facts become whatever we feel like believing at a particular moment.

A New Year's resolution for 2017

Yet, all of these things (and more) which would have been abnormal, inexcusable and unacceptable in the past, have become the "new normal." For better or worse, we've learned to live with them in 2016. The real danger is that, like hesitating at a drinking fountain, we'll get used to all of this, and it will all become the normal way we do business.

Perhaps our number one New Year's resolution for 2017 should be to make sure that last year's "new normal" doesn't become normal for the future.

Political columnist Paul Rozycki can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu

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Flint Fresh Mobile Market a healthy food oasis on wheels

By Megan Ockert

In the face of local food deserts, lead contamination and chronic disease in the community, Amber Hasan and her Flint Fresh Mobile Market are trying to provide an oasis on wheels.

Supported in partnership with the Flint Farmers' Market, the Local Grocer, and Flint Food Works, Hasan and her assistant manager Bobby Blake have taken to the streets in a delivery van loaded with fresh locally grown food and other healthful items.

Hasan and Blake stock the mobile market with produce from local growers, including onions, potatoes, carrots, cabbage, broccoli, radishes and squash. They also have dry beans, organic canned beans, rice, pasta and sauces, as well as chicken and vegetable broths and a selection of "grab and go items" like chicken salad sandwiches and yogurt.

"In the future, we hope to offer meat. There is a definite need for it among the Flint community," Hasan said.

Flint Fresh operates four days a week, open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays through Wednesdays, and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursdays. Its stops have included Slidell Senior Residence Apartments on Carpenter Road, Dion's Party Store on North Saginaw Street, Brennan Community Center on Pingree Avenue behind the Food Bank, and the Neighborhood Engagement Hub on Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Partners aplenty

Her efforts, one example of a nonprofit public and private partnership evolving in Flint in the wake of the water crisis, appear to be working, with plans firming up for winter hours at convenient locations around town.

For now, their van has been rented or provided by one of their partners, the Neighborhood Engagement Hub on Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Other partners include the YMCA, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan and the Community Foundation of Greater Flint.

Flint Fresh debuted last August during the Crim Festival of Races and throughout the summer and fall regularly visited four sites offering fresh produce and other items.

Local Grocer key player

The Local Grocer, co-owned by Erin Caudell and Franklin Pleasant, plays a big part in the mobile market's day-to-day operations.

"We coordinate the ordering and the logistics for the Flint Fresh Mobile Market," Caudell said, "and we work with local farmers to supply the produce. Some of it comes from the Flint Ingredient Company, which is the sister business to The Local Grocer, and some of it comes from other farmers in Genesee and Lapeer counties as well as from the Lansing area."

The mobile market concept developed after



Photo by Amber Hasan

Flint Fresh Mobile Market

closures in recent years of two VG's and a Kroger on Davison Road left thousands of Flint residents without convenient access to fresh food. The water crisis with its burden of lead contamination additionally propelled the effort to get nutritious food to the community, Hasan explained.



Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Bobby Blake and Amber Hasan

With plans to expand, Hasan said the mobile market will keep the same hours but locations are being modified to indoors for the winter. A recent Wednesday, for example, found them set up near the cafeteria at Hurley Hospital.

Up-to-date information about where and when to find the market is available at flint-fresh.com or their Facebook page at [FlintFreshMobileMarket](https://www.facebook.com/FlintFreshMobileMarket).

"Even before the water crisis, I saw a need for a way to give Flint residents fresh produce. It became apparent that a mobile market is a way to bring people what they need and ensure that everybody has access to fresh foods," Hasan said.

Water crisis propelled efforts

The water crisis has added new urgency to living a healthy lifestyle, she noted.

"I think Flint residents are trying everything

they can to prevent the adverse affects of lead poisoning including maintaining a healthy and balanced diet," she said.

Hasan and Blake additionally see their role as providing outreach, helping link Flint residents to other benefits, like aerobics classes and seminars on retirement benefits provided at some of their locations, such as the Brennan Community Center.

Further, she said, "Because we are locally supported we will not only help sustain Flint, but also build the economy."

Hasan said the Flint Fresh Mobile Market is a nonprofit partnership, governed by a board made up of some of their supporters, like The Local Grocer, YMCA, and the Neighborhood Engagement Hub.

The Local Grocer was founded in 2012 when Caudell and Pleasant purchased eight acres of vacant land in the Beecher area to farm. They had previously grown produce for an informal two-family Community Supported Agriculture program, which they would sell at small neighborhood farmers' markets.

Access to locally grown food crucial

Caudell said, "Increasing access to locally grown produce to Flint residents is part of the mission of The Local Grocer. We are excited to be a part of this unique partnership with other great organizations to offer this opportunity for growers to sell more of their produce to Flint residents."

Caudell added it's also important to offer Flint residents more opportunities to buy locally grown produce close to home.

Hasan stated Flint Fresh has found a diverse group of customers, ranging from large families to single parents. Their most frequent customers, however, are senior citizens. "Because seniors often have limited mobility it can be really hard for them to go out and get their groceries," she said.

Flint Fresh accepts cash, debit and credit cards, as well as those who receive SNAP benefits. Through the efforts of the Fair Foods Network, SNAP recipients can double their benefits through the Double Up Food Bucks Program (DUFb). This means that for every SNAP dollar spent recipients receive credit on their DUFb card to be spent on fresh produce.

Hoping for project growth

Although only two people currently staff the mobile market, Hasan said she has plans to expand, which may mean hiring more help. Hasan added she hopes to replace their borrowed mobile unit with a vehicle of their own.

For more information about how to get involved with the Flint Fresh Mobile Market, to check on schedules, to suggest other locations, and for information about hiring, visit flintfresh.com or their Facebook page at [FlintFreshMobileMarket](https://www.facebook.com/FlintFreshMobileMarket).

EVM writer Megan Ockert can be reached at ockertma@gmail.com

Dayne Walling and the Flint water crisis: victim, villain or faithful servant?

Some 32 months after former Flint Mayor Dayne Walling raised a celebratory glass and pressed a small black button to switch the source of water flowing to Flint citizens from Detroit to the Flint River, he agreed to share his version of Flint's most devastating man-made disaster with *East Village Magazine*.

Since his defeat by Karen Weaver, Walling, now 42, has been living quietly in his 1927 colonial home in the College Cultural Neighborhood with his wife, Carrie, an Albion College professor, their two teenage sons, and their rescue dog Bruno. With Bruno settled in at our feet, the interview was conducted at the Wallings' dining room table on a snowy December day by Jan Worth-Nelson, *East Village Magazine* editor, and new *EVM* journalist Harold C. Ford, who wrote this piece.

By Harold C. Ford

"Water is an absolute vital service that most everyone takes for granted. It's a historic moment for the city of Flint to return to its roots and use our own river as our drinking water supply." —Flint Mayor Dayne Walling, *The Flint Journal*, April 27, 2014

"It is time for people to stop treating Flint like s--t." —ex-Flint Mayor Dayne Walling, *Rolling Stone*, January 22, 2016

"Life is a train of moods like a string of beads and as we pass through them, they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world in their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus." —Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience," *Essays: Second Series*, 1844

Walling wasn't the only one tragically enamored by the notion of Flint drinking the water from its namesake river:

- "This is the best choice for the city of Flint going forward." —Flint Emergency Manager Darnell Earley, *The Flint Journal*, April 27, 2014

- "It's a great system. It's a great asset the city has. Every drop we pull out, we're going to clean and put right back in the river." —Flint Utilities Director Daugherty Johnson, *The Flint Journal*, April 27, 2014

- "Individuals shouldn't notice any difference." —Stephen Busch, Lansing & Jackson District Supervisor, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), *The Flint Journal*, April 27, 2014

- "Wisely, Flint ended the relationship with Detroit and accelerated a plan to treat

Flint River water until the Karegnondi Water Authority pipeline is finished... Let's raise our glasses to a new direction for the next 40 years." —*Flint Journal* Editorial, April 13, 2014

EM Darnell Earley is long gone. Daugherty Johnson resigned as Flint's utilities director. Stephen Busch was suspended from his state job. And all three are facing charges that could put them in prison for years. *The Flint Journal* is struggling to remain solvent and relevant. And, after applying unsuccessfully for several jobs, Dayne Walling is laboring to find the next step in his lifelong passion for public service after being ousted in November 2015 by political newcomer, Karen Weaver.

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Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Dayne Walling at home

High school and college

Propelled by formal education, the arc of Dayne Walling's early life bent assuredly toward politics and public service. The son of two career educators, Walling graduated from Flint Central High School in 1992. In 10th grade, he lost his first bid for elective office when the football team's quarterback was chosen as student body president. It wouldn't be the last time he lost an election.

However, Walling's hankering for public service was seriously sparked in Dick Ramsdell's Model United Nations (UN) class where the future Flint mayor discovered, "I'm a natural speaker." In 1991, Ramsdell loaded his Model UN students onto a bus and traveled to Washington, D.C., for a peace march during the first Iraq war. "That really piqued my interest in public ... and international affairs," Walling recalled.

"It was all education all the time in the Walling household," Walling reminisced. So it was on to Michigan State University's (MSU) James Madison College where he

earned a bachelor's degree in social relations. While attending MSU, Walling joined AmeriCorps, a sort of domestic Peace Corps that engages adults in public service. He volunteered in Lansing neighborhoods with other MSU students and Lansing residents. "That taught me so much about how family and neighborhood dynamics were linked with larger social, political, and economic forces," he said.

Winner of the prestigious Rhodes scholarship awarded to fewer than 4 percent of applicants, Walling attended the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom. The primary focus of the scholarship is to encourage its graduates to pursue careers in public office. Other American Rhodes graduates include Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, US Senator Cory Booker, *MSNBC*'s Rachel Maddow, and *ABC* newsman George Stephanopoulos, director for the 1992 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton (himself a Rhodes scholar). A frequent criticism of Rhodes graduates is that too many "were content with comfortable, safe jobs in academe, in law and in business (and) that too few had careers in government or ... public service." (*Rhodes Scholars, Oxford, and the Creation of an American Elite*, Thomas J. Schaeper & Kathleen Schaeper, 2010) In his fourth decade, Walling would discover that a career in politics was less than "comfortable."

The Oxford experience for Walling included a successful masters degree program in urban affairs at the University of London's Goldsmiths College. Goldsmiths had the advantage for him, Walling said, of being near a local Habitat for Humanity

(Continued on Page 9.)

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... Walling

(Continued from Page 8.)

office. With a classmate, he formed a student chapter of Habitat and worked on the first Habitat house in England outside of London. "I always wanted to roll up my sleeves and get to work," he said.

* * * * *

Transition to public service

Walling found work of a political nature when he returned to Michigan in the summer of 1998. While most other Rhodes scholars traveled the globe, Walling opted to return to his hometown and was offered the position of field coordinator in Dale Kildee's successful congressional campaign. The position was suggested to him by David Solis, a colleague of Walling's father and a consultant for the Kildee campaign. Walling recalls the experience as "part of being educated as to how our democracy works (and) that struck a chord with me."

Walling's first full-time foray as a paid public servant was in the administration of Anthony Williams, Washington, D.C.'s mayor from 1999 to 2007. Williams, a former D.C. emergency manager, took over the mayor's office from the disgraced Marion Berry. In his two terms as D.C. mayor, Williams was principally responsible for taking D.C. from a \$518 million deficit to a nearly \$1.6 billion surplus. *Washington Post* columnist Colbert King opined, "On his watch, the District underwent its most profound transformation in generations." ("A Success Story in His Comfort Zone", *The Washington Post*, December 30, 2006). Unlike the early 21st century experience in Flint, the nation's capital city had found a most successful emergency manager who was generally admired by his constituents. Williams may have been Walling's Yoda, providing lessons that could serve him well later in his public service career.

The next few years would include time spent in Minneapolis at the University of Minnesota where Walling and his wife would work on their Ph.D.s. She completed hers; he did not, listing himself as a "Ph.D. candidate." He also worked at a number of community and consulting tasks including a stint at the Urban Coalition of Minneapolis.

Walling eventually returned to Flint once again and found work as a senior research fellow with the Genesee Institute, a research arm of the Genesee County Land Bank. He said he knew during his time at the Land Bank that he was going to run for elective office. "When we moved back to Flint in the spring of 2006," he remembered, "I had the intention of running ... for mayor."

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Entry into Flint mayoral politics

In one way, Walling's entry into Flint mayoral politics was unlikely. The Walling family name was missing from the registry of Flint family political dynasties. That registry would include political thoroughbreds from the Clack, McCree, Gadola, and Kildee clans. Walling agrees, "My family was always involved in the community (but) was not a political family." Nonetheless, Walling saw himself as a problem-solver politician.

"Growing up in Flint and coming of age in the 1980s instilled in me a sense that there were things in American society that were deeply flawed. And, at the same time ... I had so many incredible educational and life opportunities that I carried with me this dual sense of concern and privilege," he said.

Others also thought the tall, articulate, well-educated Walling a good fit for political office. Walling recalls that in 2005, former US Senator Don Riegle pulled Walling aside at an



Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Flushing hydrants were commonplace in 2016

MLK dinner in Flint and asked, "Have you ever thought about running for elected office?"

"The time for you to run is now," Riegle urged.

Earlier, in 2004, Walling was the host of an especially successful envisioning event of the Flint Club. The club, whose mission was to inspire networking among Flintstones no matter where they lived, was the brainchild of Walling. Hobnobbing at a local pub following the event, Walling remembers that Matt Zacks, founder/publisher of the *Uncommon Sense* alternative newspaper, bluntly chided him, "A lot of us are back here busting our asses. You need to move back here (from Minneapolis) and run for mayor."

Ironically, it was the behavior of then-Flint Mayor Don Williamson that would provide the final push. "It was my perception of former mayor Williamson's disastrous behavior in office that prompted me to shift my family's trajectory, move back home, and try to be

part of the solution," he recollected. "I saw more and more how important it was to have good elected officials."

Walling entered the 2007 Flint mayoral primary, one of seven candidates. Don Williamson and Dayne Walling finished in the top two spots and would face off in the November election. Grizzled, rough-and-tumble Williamson versus idealistic, political neophyte Walling. Though supported by the Michigan Democratic Party, Walling lost; Williamson won.

Besieged by scandal and facing a recall election, Williamson resigned as mayor in February 2009. Following the resignation, Michael Brown was appointed temporary mayor until a special election that summer, when Walling faced off against political royalty in the person of Genesee County Commissioner Brenda Clack. Aug. 4, Walling triumphed and became the 94th mayor of Flint, Michigan.

* * * * *

State takeover of Flint

In the general election on Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2011, incumbent Dayne Walling bested challenger Darryl Buchanan, 56% to 44%, to remain Flint's mayor. But his victory was shortlived. At 3 p.m. Walling took a call from State Treasurer Andy Dillon who informed him that the state of Michigan was, effectively, taking over the city of Flint, Michigan. Governor Rick Snyder's in-your-face public announcement was made two hours later at 5 p.m., just in time for the evening newscasts.

Snyder announced that a state review panel had declared the city of Flint to be in a state of financial emergency. Michael Brown, who had been temporary mayor after Don Williamson's resignation, was named as the city's emergency manager.

"I knew immediately it would be the biggest challenge of my life to figure out how to deal with the state, with total Republican control, and the ability to pass any legislation they pleased, and still somehow serve the city I was just elected to represent," Walling recollected. "Everybody making decisions in Lansing was on the other side of the aisle and they clearly had their eyes on Flint, Detroit and other cities that were struggling financially and economically."

Walling considered resignation but decided against it. "I felt like I would be letting down the community that just went through an election to choose a mayor for the next four years." Instead, he issued a one-sentence email statement that read, "I look forward to working with Mr. Brown to address the community's priorities and to secure the city's financial stability."

Another former mayor, Woodrow Stanley, on the other hand, was less compromising. He told *M-Live's* Kristin Longley, "I'm not a supporter of the emergency financial manage-

(Continued on Page 10.)

The Flint Water Crisis: An (incomplete) timeline*

The very convoluted story of how an American city with a population of some 100,000 souls was poisoned by their own water system is one involving many layers of government with details still being uncovered. An incomplete timeline* reveals the following:

2011: The first Emergency Manager (EM) of four is appointed by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder to take control of Flint's city government.

2011: A study finds that in order for Flint River water to be drinkable, it would have to be treated with an anti-corrosion agent at a cost of about a hundred dollars a day.

December 2012: Michigan's Treasury Department, having control over Flint's finances, narrows Flint's water source choices to staying with the Detroit Water and Sewage Department (DWSD) or a new source to be constructed known as the Karegnondi Water Authority (KWA), both drawing water from Lake Huron.

March 2013: Though it has no power, Flint's City Council chooses the KWA. Internal Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) memos warn of challenges in using water from the Flint River.

April 2013: Flint's EM signs an agreement to join the KWA. DWSD notifies Flint it will end its water contract with Flint in one year.

June 2013: Flint's EM hires Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam, Inc. (LAN) to plan the switch to Flint River water.

August 2013: A report from LAN to the DEQ does not recommend the use of corrosion control chemicals.

March 2014: Flint's EM Darnell Earley turns down DWSD's offer to continue to buy its water.

April 9, 2014: State environmental regulators approve permits that allow the city to switch to the Flint River.

April 17, 2014: In a memo to the DEQ, Flint Water Treatment Plant supervisor Mike Glasgow warns against using Flint River water "anytime soon."

April 25, 2014: Flint's water source is switched after 50 years from the DWSD to the Flint River, which is 19 times more corrosive than that from Lake Huron. Anti-corrosive agents are not added as required by Federal law. Flint River's corrosive and untreated water begins to leach lead and contaminants from old infrastructure. About half of Flint's homes are more than 50 years old and many have lead pipes or pipes with lead solder.

June 2014: Flint residents begin to complain almost immediately about the quality of their water. For the most part, they are ignored.

June 3-4, 2014: Flint EM Darnell Earley advises the Flint City Council that Flint Mayor Dayne Walling would now be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Department of Planning and Development and the Department of Public Works. Walling tells M-Live reporter Ron Fonger, "The heads of two major city departments will be directly reporting to me."

June 12, 2014: Mayor Walling tells MLive.com, "I think people are wasting their precious money buying bottled water."

June 2014 to November 2015: Eighty-seven cases of Legionnaire's disease, a water-borne disease, and 12 resultant deaths are documented in Genesee County. The public will not be notified of this outbreak until January 2016.

August 2014: Flint water tests positive for E. coli bacteria. Advisories are issued to boil water.

October 2014: A General Motors engine plant stops using Flint water because of its corrosiveness. Two key Snyder aides raise alarm bells about Flint water. Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) alerts Genesee County officials that Flint's water might be linked to an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease.

January 6, 2015: M-Live's Ron Fonger reports that Flint's mayor Dayne Walling "... said he maintains faith in the water produced by the city."

January 2015: Flint is found in violation of the Safe Water Drinking Act. DWSD offers to reconnect Flint to Lake Huron water and waive a \$4 million connection fee; Flint's EM declines the offer. Water coolers are provided to an office building in Flint that houses state workers as an alternative to fountains that provide Flint water.

January 23, 2015: Mayor Walling tells M-Live "... I wasn't directly involved in the city's (decision) to use the Flint River as a source ... It's now clear that the challenge was underestimated."

January 2015: Walling sends request to Snyder for \$20 million in aid and to the White House for a direct point of contact at the EPA.

February 2015: Michigan's DEQ falsely informs the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that Flint is treating its water correctly. A city test reveals high lead content in at least one Flint home. An internal EPA memo documents communication between the EPA and

(Continued on Page 11.)

... Walling

(Continued from Page 9.)

er law (and) that doesn't change based on who gets appointed."

Michigan has had emergency manager (EM) laws for nearly three decades. Public Act 72, the Local Government Fiscal Responsibility Act, was passed in 1990 when James Blanchard, a Democrat, was Michigan's governor. The act was rarely used throughout the Blanchard, Engler, and Granholm administrations. In 2011, Snyder signed Public Act 4, a beefed up EM law. Michigan voters rejected that law via referendum in 2012 only to see a new bill, PA 436, passed a month later. The undemocratic stipulation included in PA 436 was that the voters could not repeal it.

Flint's major newspaper, *The Flint Journal*, fell in line with Republican-dominated state government. It proclaimed in a December 2, 2012 editorial: "The reality is we need the emergency manager's sweep-

ing powers and political immunity to make the drastic changes and tough decisions to secure the future of the community. There is a lot at stake here, and the emergency financial manager remains our best option." Critics would observe that the *Journal's* submissive editorial stance was informed by diminished investigative journalism.

A Shakespearean drama

The scene was set for a Shakespearean tragedy to be played out in the beleaguered city. Mayor Dayne Walling would play Cassio to Governor Rick Snyder's Iago in a remade version of the bard's Othello.

Setting: Cassio is a young and inexperienced soldier. Iago is good at manipulating others.

Proclaims Iago: "If I can get him to drink just one more cup / on top of what he has had to drink already / he'll be as quarrelsome and disagreeable / as my young lady's dog."

Conclusion: Iago leads Cassio into com-

mitting an action that will disgrace him and, thus betrays Cassio.

The water crisis and Walling

Thus, the Republican-controlled state government of Michigan with Snyder leading the charge, took control of Flint's city government, the water was befouled, and Walling was chased from office by Flint voters. As the crisis played out, three ways of looking at Walling have emerged. Some think Walling was a good person in the wrong place at the wrong time. Others deem his responses to the state takeover of Flint and constituent complaints about water quality to be tepid at best. Some believe him to be complicit in the events that ultimately led to the Flint water crisis.

Father Phil Schmitter, a longtime Flint-area social justice activist, criticized Walling for his repeated declarations that Flint River

(Continued on Page 11.)

... Timeline

(Continued from Page 9.)

DEQ about the high level of lead found in Flint's water.

March 10, 2015: An email from Genesee County Health Department's (GCHD) James Henry to Mayor Walling and others warns of a Legionella disease "crisis" in the county and cites the "city's lack of cooperation."

March 13, 2015: DEQ's Brad Wurfel, in an email to Snyder aide Harvey Hollins, notes "uptick in Legionnaires' cases" in Genesee County, says GCHD's Henry "is beyond irresponsible."

March 16, 2015: Snyder Communications Director Jarrod Agen (who will become chief of staff in January 2016) receives information about the Legionnaires' crisis in Flint. (Nine months later in January 2016, Snyder makes the first public pronouncement of the Legionnaires' outbreak in Flint saying he learned of it just days before.)

March 19, 2015: An email from GCHD's Henry cites trouble in getting records from the city of Flint "in efforts to better protect the public."

March 23-24, 2015: Though it has no authority, Flint City Council votes to reconnect to the DWSD. Flint EM Jerry Ambrose advises against reconnecting due to high costs.

April 24, 2015: DEQ now informs EPA that no corrosion control is in place, two months after reporting otherwise.

April 27, 2015: Laurel Garrison, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, expresses concern to Genesee County officials about the Legionnaires' outbreak, "one of the largest we know of in the past decade," and indicates that city and state officials are withholding information.

June/July 2015: Another memo by the EPA's Miguel Del Toral shows lead levels high enough at one Flint home to poison a child in that home; Del Toral sounds alarms for months about Flint's water and the lack of corrosion control. A regional EPA administrator tells Flint's mayor "it would be premature to draw any conclusions" from the memo. A DEQ spokesman tells Flint residents to "relax".

July 9, 2015: Using the June 2015 memo by EPA's Del Toral, Michigan ACLU reporter Curt Guyette breaks the story about lead in Flint's water due to the lack of corrosion control.

July 10, 2015: EPA Region 5 Director Susan Hedman assures Mayor Walling that her agency is working to provide Flint residents "safe drinking water."

July 22, 2015: Snyder Chief of Staff, Dennis Muchmore, sends memo to heads of DHHS and DEQ alleging that Flint residents "are basically getting blown off by us."

September 3, 2015: An email from Howard Croft, Flint DPW director, contends that Flint is now in compliance with the Michigan Safe Water Drinking Act according to the DEQ. Investigators will later conclude that the city's sampling methods were flawed.

September 8, 2015: Virginia Tech Professor Marc Edwards and a team of researchers find elevated lead levels in Flint homes and make their findings public. The report states bluntly in caps, "FLINT HAS A VERY SERIOUS LEAD IN WATER PROBLEM." His findings are discredited by the DEQ and some Flint officials. EPA guidelines say 5 parts per billion (ppb) of lead is a cause for health concern. Many Flint homes test above 100 ppb; one home tests at 13,000+ ppb. Michigan officials manipulate some water test samples for better results.

September 9, 2015: Edwards writes Walling and advises, "... If you want to protect consumers in your city, you should start listening directly to Mr. Del Toral." DEQ's Wurfel accuses Edwards of "fanning political flames irresponsibly."

September 15, 2015: Walling requests \$30 million in state funds for improvements in Flint's water infrastructure.

September 24, 2015: Flint physician Mona Hanna-Attisha releases a report that finds lead levels in Flint children she tested have doubled or tripled since the switch to Flint River water. Her work is discredited by the DEQ and DHHS as "a little science and a lot of politics." She reviews and reconfirms her findings.

September 25, 2015: City of Flint issues a lead advisory.

September 26, 2015: An email from Snyder Chief of Staff Muchmore alleges that "Walling went out on CYA (cover your ass) effort due to the election (and) has (no) idea where his \$30M figure came from."

October 2015: Flint and state officials end their attempts to discredit the Edwards and Attisha studies. Denial, defense, and deflection shift to action. Elevated lead in Flint's water is confirmed and residents are advised to not drink the water. Genesee County declares a public health emergency. Snyder admits mistakes in the water switch.

October 2015: Flint reconnects to Lake Huron water from the DWSD but infrastructure damage from untreated corrosive water results in continued leaching and high lead levels in Flint water.

November 3, 2015: Karen Weaver defeats incumbent Flint mayor, Dayne Walling by a margin of 56% to 43%.

*(Timeline sources include Michigan Public Radio, CNN.com, Detroit Free Press, Bridge Magazine, M-Live, Flint Water Advisory Task Force Final Report.)

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(Continued from Page 10.)

water was safe. In *Bridge Magazine*, Schmitter addressed Walling directly, "You delayed your action on this issue for an inordinate amount of time. People were told over and over that it was all fine ... I no longer trust the city on this issue. And that we have now a lead problem for babies and children is unconscionable."

Kettering University Professor Benjamin Pauli, who has been involved with grassroots responses to the crisis since 2015, and is writing an academic book based on it, told *EVM* he is "convinced that Walling's role in the water crisis is what lost him the election, but the vote can also be seen more broadly as a rejection of his governing style. I think residents wanted a leader who would channel their anger and outrage ..."

Finding folks upset by the Flint water debacle is not difficult. Former Flint resident and *Rolling Stone* writer Stephen Rodrick

penned: "Flint doesn't make me laugh anymore. It makes me want to punch someone in the face." "I'm angry," said Walling in his Congressional testimony on March 15, 2016. But Walling's anger seems subdued as he responded to *EVM* questions about the water crisis in calm, measured, analytical tones. "As a person, my instinct is to work hard to try to fix the problem and I try to channel my anger and frustration into a solution," he told *EVM*. "That's not always the best politics but that's how I operate."

Some wished the former mayor had been more vocal, in comments to *EVM*. "I think it was convenient to be able to say, 'Oh, I can't do anything because I've got an emergency manager,'" opined Laura Sullivan, also a Kettering professor, water activist and now a member, appointed by Mayor Weaver, of the KWA pipeline board.

"You can speak, you can talk, you can meet with people in the neighborhoods where kids are sick," Sullivan said. "The emergency manager was able to push these things

through because Dayne was quiet."

The woman who replaced Walling in the mayor's office, Karen Weaver, was critical of his leadership style during the city's emergency. During the campaign, she told *M-Live*, "I believe it's a failure of leadership and broken trust. When you know something is wrong you should speak out. I know there's an emergency manager but it doesn't take your voice."

For his part, Walling told *EVM* he wasn't standing still during that time. "I was not ignoring Flint's water problems," he implored. "I was working every day ... to resolve the crisis: filters, budget adjustments, training, more testing, publishing test results ..."

And Walling claimed he did not ignore citizen complaints. "I didn't doubt that anyone complaining to the city had a problem," he recollected. "It was a question of what that meant for the system overall ... I knew there were concerns people had about the water coming out of their tap but I did also believe

(Continued on Page 12.)

... Walling

(Continued from Page 11.)

that the water met the standards that were applied to every other drinking water system in the state. I didn't think Flint's water system was being treated differently."

So, when did Walling know the water was bad? When pressed by Congressman Elijah Cummings, D-Md, during his March 2016 testimony, Walling replied, "Summer of 2014." If that's true, then Walling continued to falsely assure Flint residents in his public statements that their water was safe for nearly a year. June 12, 2014: "I think people are wasting their precious money buying bottled water." January 6, 2015: Walling said he "... maintains faith in the water produced by the city." An April 2015 tweet, as reported by *The Flint Journal*: "(My) family and I drink and use the Flint water every day, at home, work, and schools."

But the public display of support for Flint water that Walling most regrets was in July of 2015 when he was asked by a TV Channel 5 reporter to drink the water on television. And he did. "I drank the water because my family and I were drinking the water every single day," he recalled. "What I learned is that people perceive that I was making a broader, kind of blanket certification of the water's safety ... in doing that I was discounting all the concerns that had come to my desk. What I did was honest, but it didn't communicate the right thing." For the record, the water in Walling's Flint home tested okay.

Despite his public endorsements, Walling claimed that the switch to the Flint River as a water source wouldn't have happened under his watch. On September 29, 2015, he told Michigan Public Radio's Cynthia Canty, "I can't see any scenario where myself and Flint City Council would have supported going back to the Flint River; and that's probably not based on any science ... The perceptions of the Flint River in this community - it's getting better for fishing and canoeing - but beyond that the idea of drinking the Flint River water is something that most people in this community start off not liking," he surmised. "I don't think elected officials could've made that decision."

In his March 2016 testimony before Congress, Walling pointed to a trifecta as causes of the water crisis:

1. "The regulators provided false assurances to us about the safety of the water ..."
2. "Michigan's financial manager system focused too much on cutting costs without adding adequate safeguards and transparency."
3. "Governor Snyder ... discounted local concerns and did not act with urgency."

☛ The water scientists did it:

That Flint was under the iron-fisted financial control of state government and their sur-

rogate emergency managers beginning in 2011 throughout the remainder of Walling's reign as Flint mayor is undisputed. That Walling was officially powerless is arguable. As early as the summer of 2014, some power was restored to Walling by Emergency Manager Darnell Earley. Earley "increased Mayor Walling's responsibilities under Order No. 17 dated June 2014 (and) that Mayor Walling would now be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Department of Planning and Development and the Department of Public Works." His annual compensation was set at \$82,500. The Flint DPW oversees, among other departments, Water Pollution Control, Sewer Department, Water Department, and Water Treatment Plant.

The restoration of some powers to Mayor Walling raises several questions: Who reported to the mayor and what did they report? As suggested by Senator Howard Baker's query during the

ent than lake water. But, they had early clues that river water was very different from lake water; and at that point you can put your head in the sand and not fully appreciate what's going on ... I think that there was ... a sort of blowing off of the worries and concerns and the opinions of Flint residents ..."

Pauli said Walling, like so many others, believed misinformation from the "water scientists" and politicians. "Everyone around him ... was telling him that these concerns were unfounded, or at least exaggerated, and he more or less bought into this interpretation," Pauli speculated. "To be fair, so did plenty of other people. It took months of incessant struggle before the water activists convinced anyone that there was something seriously wrong with the water. But Walling ended up in some particularly compromising situations that effectively made him the poster child for 'the water is safe' narrative. There is no question that this narrative helped



Photo by Nic Custer

Judge Greg Mathis, Phaedra Parks, Melissa Mays, Jesse Jackson and others lead February 2016 protest march

Watergate scandal, one might ask, "What did the (mayor) know, and when did he know it?" Walling contends that he was, like so many others, misled by the "water scientists" at the public agencies. He told Congress, "I had my own concerns about the river, was hearing concerns from the public, but I did rely on the information provided from the MDEQ and the appointed public works leadership." Walling confesses, "I echoed these reassurances to the public, and wholly regret it, and will never do it again."

Others aren't so sure that Walling did not have access to critical information. Sullivan reasoned, "... he could've brought in experts ... he had the ability to get more fully informed." Further, she said, "My hunch is that the water quality crisis completely caught him and everybody else involved off guard because they didn't appreciate that river water is differ-

to delay discovery of the lead problem and the eventual switch back to Detroit water."

Flint activist and water warrior Arthur Woodson is less nuanced in comments to EVM. "All of them are villains, including Dayne Walling," he said. "Darnell Earley signed an order putting Dayne Walling over public works ... (and) Dayne was right there in the thick of things."

☛ The EMs did it:

As for the concept of emergency managers, Walling conceded, "There is no question that a state government needs the ability to step in and address gross mismanagement, corruption, etc." Beyond that, Walling had little positive to say about emergency managers.

Walling told *EVM* that he has less concern about Public Act 72, signed by former gover-

(Continued on Page 13.)

... Walling

(Continued from Page 12.)

nor Jim Blanchard, that allowed for financial intervention. However, two provisions of Public Act 4, the current EM law that replaced PA 72, “went too far.” First, the EM becomes the mayor and the city council; the executive and legislative functions of city government are usurped; checks and balances are substantially lost.

Second, Walling argued that, “We can’t confuse gross mismanagement with structural financial problems. An EM doesn’t solve a structural problem.” He accused Republicans of equating “structural problems” with “the expense of public employees.” “PA 4 invested EMs with the unique and sole ability to impose union contracts without negotiations.” He contended, “No one else can impose a contract on a union; and it’s my belief that structural financial problems in cities are related to broader, regional, economic and social patterns and how that interfaces with our tax and revenue system.”

He concluded, “I want the fix to be with regional property tax sharing, additional shared local income taxes.” He argues that you “can’t blame the problem on a Flint firefighter who retired 20 years ago.” He noted that Flint’s problems have not been fixed after four emergency managers, nor have EMs solved the problems of Detroit schools after 12 years of state takeover.

Pauli told *EVM*, “There is no doubt that Walling was placed in a difficult position by the imposition of emergency management on the city. Even with the best intentions, it would have been hard for him to push forward an agenda that conflicted with the state’s designs. The underlying question here, though, is how to remain relevant under emergency management as an elected official stripped of one’s powers?”

Pauli continued, “I think his belief was that cooperating with the state would be the fastest way to get the city out of receivership. He also happened to agree with some of the reforms the emergency managers were trying to implement. But many residents saw this as ‘going along to get along’... with the powers-that-be.” Pauli argued that a more assertive Walling may have won over more of the voters. “I think what they wanted was an outspoken advocate for the community who didn’t have a problem adopting an adversarial attitude towards the state when necessary.”

☛ It was the Guv:

Rolling Stone writer Rodrick assessed the cause of Flint’s water crisis bluntly when he writes, “... this man-made disaster can be traced to one fact: Republicans not giving a s--t about poor kids as much as

they give a s--t about the green of the bottom line.” And the head Republican in Michigan throughout the water crisis has been a guy named Rick Snyder who looks in the mirror and sees ‘one tough nerd.’ He signed a veto-proof emergency manager law; and he appointed all four of Flint’s emergency managers that presided over the water crisis.” Enter Iago stage right; enter Cassio stage left.

When *EVM* offered Walling the opportunity to slap Governor Snyder, figuratively or otherwise, he said, “Yes, but I’ll tell you what I want him to do most of all ... is seriously address the problem, and that still hasn’t happened in full.” Political reality has already slapped down Snyder’s chances for political office after his current term. Once considered a possibility for a vice-presidential spot on the GOP ticket, or a cabinet post in the new Washington administration, his image has been tarnished, likely beyond repair.

Snyder largely ignored and scoffed at Walling’s attempts at meetings and suggestions for solutions. The mayor wrote the governor a letter in January of 2015 about the crisis; there was no response for nine months.

The mayor tried again in September of the same year; again, no response. Shortly thereafter, Walling requested a visit to Flint by the governor because, “This is what governors



Photo by Nic Custer

“Snyder” in jail stripes at a water crisis protest

and presidents do when there’s a crisis and I was disappointed I had to ask in the first place ... ” he told *EVM*. Walling received a response, from Flint’s Emergency Manager Jerry Ambrose, who told him Snyder’s office would “check the calendar.”

Snyder’s Chief Aide Dennis Muchmore saw Walling’s requests as a form of CYA (cover your ass) by a politician in an election year. Walling’s response to the brushoffs from the governor’s office: “I do think from reading the emails that have continued to come out that our community was unfairly treated by the governor and his senior staff

because they were viewing it through a political lens. I’ve seen in emails that my calls to address lead in the system were because I was running for reelection and needed a campaign issue ... ”

Walling continued, “I believed it was my duty as the elected mayor to go directly to the governor ... and say nothing’s more important in our community right now than safe water, and here’s what you need to do to fix it, and you need to come see us in Flint. I was angry how the governor’s office and the governor himself didn’t take my requests and our community’s concerns seriously.”

Snyder finally showed his face in Flint in October of 2015 for the announcement that Flint was switching back to Detroit water.

Laura Sullivan laid some of the blame for Snyder’s indifference to Flint on Walling’s political lap. “I think if Dayne Walling had taken the community’s needs seriously, maybe the governor might have taken them more seriously,” she said. “He (Walling) didn’t push to check to make sure (the water) was safe. He got on TV and drank the water.”

☛ Race and politics

A few political realities: Michigan’s state government is monopolized by white Republicans who mostly represent suburban and rural communities. Most large cities in Michigan are controlled by the Democrats and often have large African American populations. Keen observers of the political scene might agree that these demographic-political realities had something to do with the Flint water crisis. Dayne Walling does.

Walling told *EVM*, “I think race and class and party politics played a role ... The administration in Lansing wouldn’t take our community’s concerns seriously and that’s because we’re a majority African American community, and are economically disadvantaged, and tend to vote Democratic. The governor’s task force was right to conclude that this is a case of environmental racism and injustice.”

Walling continued, “I didn’t think that when I was on the phone with the governor’s chief of staff, and the governor himself, that they would be discounting what I was saying because 2015 happened to be an election year and I’m one of the candidates.”

Water warrior Woodson, a frequent critic of Flint area politicians, doesn’t believe Walling ever appreciated that race was a factor in the water crisis. “No, no he didn’t,” Woodson said without hesitation. “Dayne Walling was about Dayne Walling ... ”

Nonetheless, race and party politics do not fully explain the reasons why public servants would commit misdeeds that hurt people they are supposed to serve. “I still don’t understand how that makes a state employee falsify a report,” Walling told *EVM*. “There must be more going on that we don’t know ... I still don’t accept the premise that because

(Continued on Page 14.)

... Walling

(Continued from Page 13.)

we're from one party or another, and we disagree on tax policies or social matters that leads directly to people taking criminal action against our community."

Tarnished political promise

Like Snyder, Walling is damaged goods politically. The shining arc of public service that bent assuredly from Flint Central High school all the way to the Flint mayor's office



Photo by Nic Custer

Tony Watts carries call to "Rebuild Flint" at February protest

has been dimmed, at least for the time being. A continued life filled with political success and/or public service to citizens may not be easily realized in his hometown.

Sullivan agreed: "I don't think he could run for office in the Flint area because the things that he did affected the lives of thousands of people. I can't imagine that being forgotten."

Woodson resolutely trumpeted, "Dayne Walling better not ever, ever, ever ... run for office."

And there are those who predict the possibility of more turbulence for those close to the water crisis, Walling included.

The latest round of indictments announced by Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette's office went upward and deeper into state and local government. Charges were filed against Earley and Ambrose, two emergency managers appointed by Governor Rick Snyder and two city employees that answered to Mayor Dayne Walling. Attorney General Schuette announced that more indictments are on the way.

Woodson said he sees the latest indictments heading unquestionably in the direction of the costly and labyrinthian deal that created the Karegnondi Water Authority. The KWA pipeline project from Port Huron currently prices out at \$285 million. Woodson claimed that both construction companies and politi-

cians that support the project are benefitting. The construction companies get the work and the "local politicians get hundreds of thousands of dollars," he said. "It was never about saving money to put in the phosphates; they never had the equipment to put the phosphates in; it was about the KWA."

A March, 2016 *Detroit Free Press* story supported Woodson's remarks: Mike Glasgow – then utilities administrator, later one of the first indicted parties in the crisis – testified at a legislative hearing that the water treatment plant, according to the *Free Press*, "wasn't capable of adding corrosion control treatment, not without equipment upgrades the broke city couldn't afford." One of the KWA contractors said at the time those upgrades would cost upwards of \$34 million.

Meanwhile, Dayne Walling was chair of the KWA Board of Trustees.

Final thoughts

Governor Snyder's Flint Water Advisory Task Force pointed its weighty investigative

finger squarely at the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality:

"We believe the primary responsibility for what happened in Flint rests with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Although many individuals and entities at the state and local levels contributed to creating and prolonging the problem, MDEQ is the government agency that has responsibility to ensure safe drinking water in Michigan. It failed in that responsibility and must be held accountable for that failure."

In brief, the task force found that MDEQ failed in three fundamental ways: regulatory failure; failure in substance and tone of MDEQ response to the public; failure in MDEQ interpretation of the Lead and Copper rule.

Walling himself hinted that more indictments are likely. He said, "Given that there have been indictments in two state agencies, it seems to me there has to be a common link higher up." What, or who, is the "common link higher up"?

When envisioning Governor Snyder's role in the water crisis, two possibilities

(Continued on Page 15.)



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... Walling

(Continued from Page 14.)

emerge. The notion that a plethora of top aides and department heads knew about the foul Flint water, but Snyder didn't, could mean that: 1) Snyder is an incompetent administrator, or; 2) Snyder is truth-challenged. Walling agreed: "I don't know what Gov. Snyder knew, when, but there has to be some higher link between employees in the DHHS and employees in the DEQ. It is hard to imagine how this many different public employees took this action without there

being higher action."

As for pushing the black button, Walling told *EVM* "I will regret that every day of my life for the rest of my life."

He continued, "I certainly regret Flint using Flint River water. I can go back in time and know why I publicly supported it at the time, given what I knew then, but the water crisis was an extremely difficult learning experience for me and I know that I'll make decisions differently for the rest of my life because of what's happened to our community."

As for politics and government, Walling

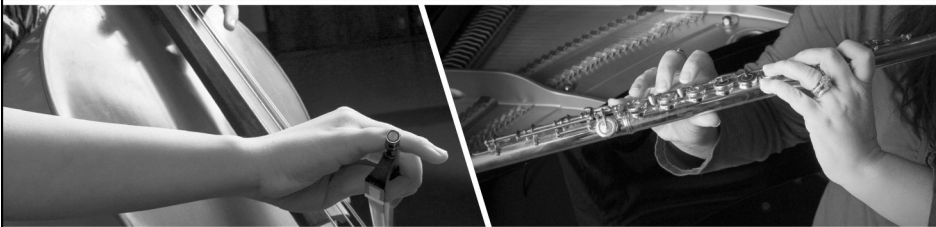
said, "My faith in our government, even state government, has been shaken. This is about broken trust."

"They messed with the wrong city. They messed with the wrong people." –Virginia Tech Professor Marc Edwards, speaking on Michigan Public Radio's *Stateside*.

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Village Life

Midnight run leads to handcuffs and a jolt about privilege

By Connor Coyne

Chicago in one day is always a whirlwind, but I did it anyway because in the writing life, a person will do almost anything for an audience and a mug of good beer. I had been invited to read at a literary event among old friends and I didn't have the luxury of an overnight.

I left in the afternoon and didn't get into the Windy City until well after dark. The reading was a success, the perfect scattershot reunion.

It was 1 a.m. when I started my way back home. Even though I knew I'd be driving through a haze of caffeine and loud music for the rest of the night, I didn't mind – I was in the afterglow of literary communion.

The expressway was empty as I eased out of town. I shot through Indiana on cruise control and crossed the Michigan border around 2

a.m. I was making great time and eager to push on, but the gas tank was empty. I pulled into a gas station in the tiny town of Sawyer.

A state police cruiser followed me into the gas station, parking at the pump right behind me. I got out of my car and noticed the officer getting out of his vehicle as well. I smiled at him and lifted the pump.

That was when he asked me to turn around and place my hands on the trunk of my car. I did. He asked a few pointed questions about my car, my driver's license, my license plate. I answered as best as I could, wracking my brain, trying to think if I had been speeding (no), if I had blown a stop sign (no), if the tags on my plates had expired (no). The officer finally explained my car had been reported stolen and he would have to handcuff me.

He said the cuffs would feel uncomfortable but if I tried to relax they shouldn't pinch. I quickly realized there was no easy way to rest my arms in this position, hands cross-angled, the metal pushing into my wrists. It wasn't painful; it was awkward.

Then another officer arrived and they escorted me to the back of a cruiser. I sat on the hard plastic seat, only half-leaning back with my hands cuffed behind me. This, too, was awkward. The second officer got into the front of the car and sat there, asking me questions about what I had been doing in Chicago and, then, what it was like to be a writer. How does someone get published anyway? ("That's a question I'm trying to answer myself," I told him.) The whole time the first officer was making calls to law enforcement in Genesee County. He finally came back and leaned in to talk to me.

Here's what happened: when my wife and I moved to Michigan, we chose a personalized plate – UDOLPHO – after one of our favorite novels: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Ann Radcliffe. A couple years ago, this plate was stolen and we replaced it with an identical new one. It turns out there is no way for law enforcement to distinguish between the stolen plate and its replacement. The whole thing was a mix-up. I hadn't, in fact, stolen my own car.

The officers shook my hand, wished me well, and sent me on my way.

Maybe from a distance the whole thing seems silly and inconsequential, but I felt shaken the rest of the ride home. Some of it was a kind of vertigo: the speed with which I had been yanked from the dreamy nostalgia of my trip to a sudden confrontation with an armed man ("That's his gun. Don't look at his gun. Look at him, but don't challenge him.") I had never been handcuffed before, nor had I ever been put in the back of a police cruiser as a possible suspect. When I heard those words – "this is a stolen vehicle" – I thought, "This is a mistake. But will they believe me? If they

don't believe me, what can I do?"

And, as my nerves gradually settled I found myself – inevitably – thinking about privilege.

Ah, "privilege." Such a loaded word. On the one hand, the notion that we are biased by our enjoyment of implicit social benefits seems so obvious that who would argue it? And yet people do, constantly. Then again, I have also seen the word lobbed into an argument (often by "privileged" people themselves) as a semantic nuke. How is it possible to rebut someone once they have invoked your privilege? This is how use of the word often strikes me: a valid, even necessary way to call attention to bias, and one which can just as easily be misapplied in our attempts to "win" a debate.

Sweeping through Kalamazoo, through Battle Creek, through Lansing – I thought back to how powerless I felt in that police car. I also thought back on how I had been reassured by the officers' professionalism. I thought back to many times throughout my life I had actually been doing things not entirely above board and had skated by on the benefit-of-the-doubt; surely, the fact that I had made it to 38 without being put into the back of a police cruiser was not solely because I'm an exemplary citizen. I thought back to the moment of encounter when the officer – young, white, male – meeting the driver of a stolen vehicle, saw a well-dressed young, white man.

I have nothing negative to say about the officers I met that night; they conducted themselves with seriousness and decency.

Yet I also have to wonder if that encounter would have gone so smoothly had I looked different. How it would have gone for my African American friends, my female friends, for friends who struggle with anxiety disorders, for friends who have already grappled with their own negative encounters with law enforcement?

By the time I finally got into Flint, pulling under the arches on Saginaw Street at about 5 a.m. in the morning, I felt like I had figured something out. What had so unnerved me that night – feelings of surprise and utter vulnerability – was the law-enforcement system working at its very best. That the way I was treated, alone with two officers, in a desolate gas station, in the middle of the night, is the way everyone should be treated.

And until everyone is treated so fairly in their encounters with law-enforcement, we have work to do.

Guest columnist Connor Coyne is a Flint novelist, writer and publisher of *Gothic Funk Press*. He can be reached at blueskiesfalling@gmail.com.

ANOTHER YEAR By Grayce Scholt

Another year has dropped
from the celestial clock that
registers the eons, centuries,
months, weeks, days,
the minutes, seconds,
nano-seconds of our lives—

What's next?

A broken spring?
a twist from
one who winds too tight?
a tinkerer too clumsy,
to adjust the mechanism of the
movement's proper beat
that turns the hands
that takes us
to another day?

Is there somewhere still
a touch,
a verge, that will
correct the beat
(ticktocktick)
and regulate
sustain
the

tick tock
tick tock,
tick tock
tick. . .

Grayce Scholt is a retired English professor from Mott College who wrote art reviews for the Flint Journal. Her book of poetry, Bang! Go All the Porch Swings, is available online from Amazon. A personal narrative of the poet's life in Europe in the early 1950s, Vienna, Only You, is available at gscholt09@comcast.net. The author's new book of poems, Night Song, is available from Friesen Press (www.friesenpress.com) and Amazon.