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Magazine

December 2017

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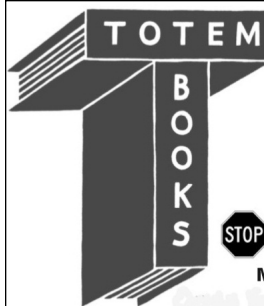


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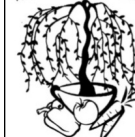
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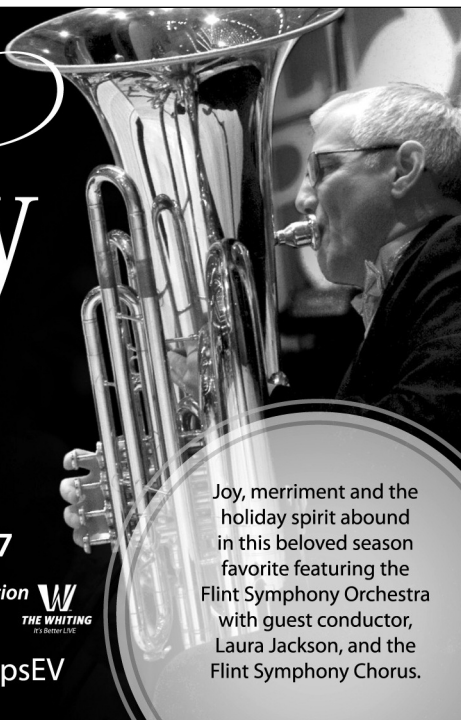
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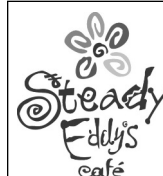


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Commentary Fixing Gerrymandering: Michigan's ballot proposal

By Paul Rozycki

"Politics is more difficult than physics."
- Albert Einstein

Last month's column took a look at the history and techniques of gerrymandering and its impact on American politics. It's not hard to see that the process of drawing odd-shaped and unfair election districts favoring one party over another is a major problem and distorts our politics in many ways.

Seeing the problem is the easy part. Fixing it may prove to be more complex than understanding Einstein's theory of relativity or the space-time continuum. But a committed group of voters — the Voters Not Politicians committee — is willing to make the attempt. They are currently gathering signatures to amend the Michigan Constitution and create a non-partisan commission to draw our election districts.

The proposed amendment would be based on three major principles. First, it would create an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to draw new legislative districts. Second, it would require transparency, so voters would be fully aware of the process, and third, it would require fairness, to assure that both parties are treated equally.

Those all sound very simple, but the devil can be in the details, and the details are complex. Here are the essentials of the proposed amendment.

Who serves on the redistricting commission?

In creating an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC) the Michigan secretary of state would have the duty of randomly selecting 13 commissioners to draw Michigan's election maps for the next decade. The commission would consist of four Democrats, four Republicans, and five independent voters, randomly chosen from a list of all registered voters in Michigan. Those who wish to serve must apply to the secretary of state. Those who apply must be registered voters and must indicate their party preference — Democrat, Republican, or independent.

In choosing the members of the commission the secretary of state would select approximately half from those who apply, and the other half from a random list of voters who have been invited to participate.

To insure a truly independent body, a number of individuals are disqualified from serving. Current partisan officeholders at the

national, state, or local level are excluded. So are close family members of those officeholders, as are registered lobbyists, and party officers. Those limits apply for six years after the end of an officeholder's term. Additionally, a few categories of state employees are also barred from the commission.

As complex as this is, the goal is to assure a truly independent, non-partisan commission. The plan is similar to the one used in California.

Transparency in the redistricting process

In the past, election maps have been drawn behind closed doors, by groups and committees of lawmakers and other interested parties. If the proposed amendment were adopted, the ICRC would be required to conduct its business in public. During the process of creating the new election districts the commission would be required to hold at least 10 public meetings in various parts of the state. At those meetings the public could comment and even offer maps of its own.

Once the final maps are drawn, the ICRC would again be required to hold at least five public meetings where they could hear comments and criticism from the public. All the records and methods used to create the new maps would be published and available to the public. At the end of the process the commissioners are required to write a report explaining their decision and the process used. Any commissioner who disagrees with the final outcome may write a dissenting report explaining his or her disagreements. To make sure that no one party controls the process, a minimum of two Democrats, two Republicans, and two independents are required to approve a final map.

Creating fair districts

The overall goal of creating the commission is to create election districts that are "fair" to all voters. In an attempt to create that sense of fairness, the commission would be required to follow a formal set of rules in their map-making process. Some of these rules are already required by federal law and court rulings. For example, the districts must be equal in population, must abide by the Voting Rights Act, may not discriminate along racial lines, and must be contiguous and connected.

However, the ICRC would also be required to consider additional factors. Districts can't favor one party over another, or one candidate over another. They should (if possible) follow existing city, township or

(Continued on Page 8.)

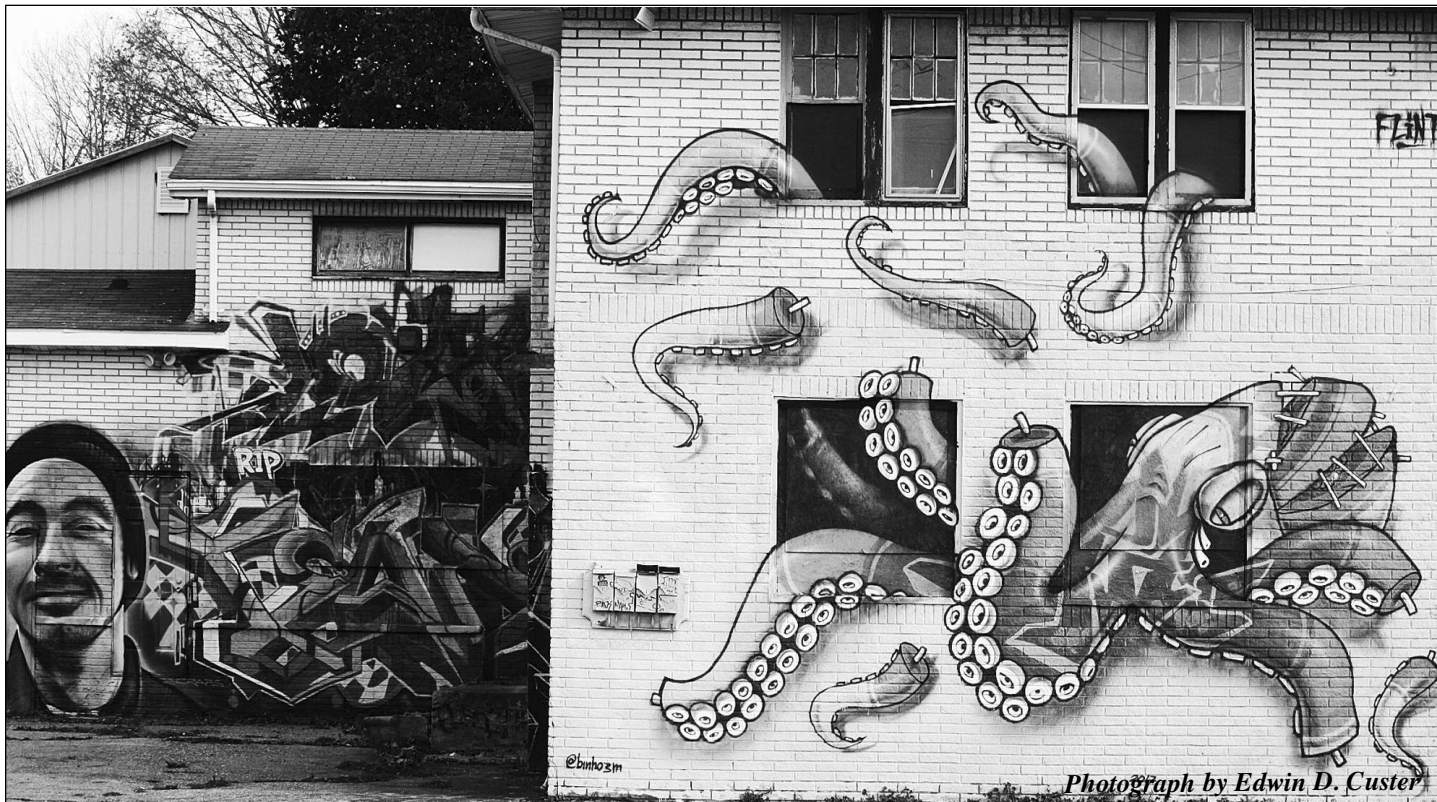


Photo of the Month: Mural at Fenton Road and 12th Street

It's "Detroit water" for 30 years: City Council okays GLWA 5-4

By Meghan Christian

After a week of marathon-like meetings, the Flint City Council approved a 30-year contract with the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), with a close vote of five to four on Tuesday, Nov. 21.

Their action, following a months' long wrangle with Mayor Karen Weaver and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, cleared the way for the GLWA board to approve the contract in Detroit Nov. 29.

The contract included amendments demanded by City Council to guarantee Flint a seat on the GLWA board for at least four years, \$750,000 in water bill relief, and the removal of any language that made Flint

Santino Guerra (Third Ward), Jerri Winfrey-Carter (Fifth Ward), and Herbert Winfrey (Sixth Ward).

Those opposed were Kate Fields (Fourth Ward), Monica Galloway (Seventh Ward), L. Allan Griggs (Eighth Ward), and Eva Worthing (Ninth Ward).

To some residents among the audience of about 60, the deal with GLWA comes with too many costs and not enough benefits for the people of Flint.

Paul Jordan, 68, said, "First of all, this is a great deal; it's a wonderful contract. It's a wonderful contract for Great Lakes Water Authority and it's a great contract for the state. And it's a lousy contract for us."

Other residents said they did not mind the idea of getting water from GLWA, but they do mind that under this deal, their conclusion is the city loses its ability to be independent and that the contract is for such an extended period of time.

Laura Sullivan, of Flint, an engineering professor at Kettering University and a board member of the Karegnondi Pipeline Authority, reminded the council that the people of Flint look to the council to protect their best interests. "The people of Flint only have you," Sullivan said.

Sullivan said her issues were with the specifics of the contract with GLWA, stating

she believes GLWA does not have the best interests of the residents at heart.



Council members Winfrey-Carter, Galloway, Griggs and Worthing

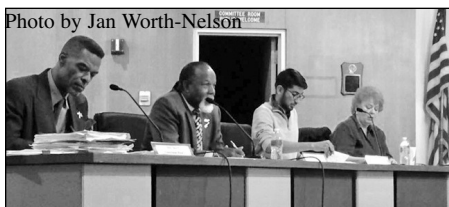
"Who loses? The people who can't afford water," Sullivan stated, referring to an aspect of the contract that could mean a four percent per year water rate rise.

Several city council members assured residents that while their choice was not easy, they believed they were making the best choice for Flint and its residents.

In voting for the contract, Fifth Ward Councilperson Winfrey-Carter said, "I am going to make the best decision tonight that I think will take care of both my constituents and my city government."

Third Ward Councilman Guerra shared

(Continued on Page 5.)



Council members Mays, Davis, Guerra and Fields

responsible for GLWA's legal fees in case of a lawsuit.

The city council's final vote was contentious to the very end.

Those in favor were Eric Mays (First Ward), Maurice Davis (Second Ward),

... GLWA

(Continued from Page 4.)

this sentiment and later urged the rest of the council to make a vote based on their values. He too chose to vote “yes.”

“Today, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote with what you personally believe is right. We hear a lot of things from activists, other politicians, family members, outside sources that always tell you to vote one way or the other ... But I will tell you, today when I go home I will be proud of this decision I made,” Guerra said.

He added, “If you are unhappy with the individuals that are your representatives, you should let them know, but ... be willing to work with them ... If this is still bugging you come election time, run against them. You have a voice, you have the opportunity to get involved,” Guerra said.

Sherry Hayden, a resident of the Seventh Ward and vice-president of the College Cultural Neighborhood Association, began her commentary by stating, “GLWA stinks ...”

Alleging that state officials, in particular the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, were pressuring the council to vote yes, Hayden declared, “They throw crumbs at you expecting you to take the bait. You know the amended agreement is a sham. It's unenforceable.”

She continued, “The governor will be giddy that he can move on and forget Flint. GLWA makes out like a fat rat for 30 years ... We don't have a democracy here, so quit pretending we do.”

Present in the front row throughout the public comments and the vote, Mayor Karen Weaver, who recently overcame a recall action against her and had supported the GLWA contract since the recommendation was formulated last spring, stood just before the vote to offer her thoughts.

“I want the state out of here,” she said, referring to the fact that the council's delays had led the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to sue City Council, essentially forcing a decision that had been in mediation in the courtroom of U.S. District Court Judge David Lawson. The council, just days after an election that installed five new council members, had gone to Detroit Nov. 17 for a mediation session with the judge and MDEQ officials.

In part of that wrangling, state officials had suggested that further delays by the council to

decide could lead to the state appointing a receiver, which could mean another emergency financial manager — a much detested

debacle. The city went back on Detroit water in October 2015 and in 2016, Earley was indicted for his role in the crisis.

Ironically, the now-completed Karegnondi Pipeline was the star of a “celebration of connecting to Lake Huron Water,” including an open house and tours of the Genesee County water treatment plant in Columbiaville on the same day as the council vote. Raw, untreated water from the Karegnondi pipeline will serve as a backup for the GLWA water source. An emergency backup water source is required by the EPA.

Seventh Ward Councilperson Monica Galloway, an outspoken opponent of the 30-year contract, aimed to end on a hopeful note for the City of Flint. “We still are on a long road, and I believe we have a great council and I am looking forward to working with everybody ... Now, you can really move forward and see what recovery looks like, so I am excited about that,” Galloway said.

EVM Managing Editor Meghan Christian can be reached at meghan.christian22@gmail.com. EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson contributed to this report.



Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Roomful of “No’s” did not sway enough council members to vote against the GLWA contract Nov. 21.

possibility to the council, the mayor and many Flint activists who have protested what they regard as a violation of home rule and democracy during the tenure of four emergency managers in the city since 2011. Two of the city's EM's, Darnell Earley and Jerry Ambrose, have been indicted by the state attorney general for their alleged role in the water crisis.

“It is time to prove that we can make our own decisions and we can govern ourselves,” Weaver declared. While the emergency managers have been gone from Flint since 2015, many actions by the City Council still are subject to a body called the Receivership Transition Advisory Board (RTAB), a panel selected by the governor to oversee municipal financial matters for the state after the last EM left.

The GLWA vote comes as one of the culminating events of almost four years of the water crisis. As detailed in a December *East Village Magazine* overview, the City Council had voted to go with the Karegnondi Pipeline, an alternate route to Lake Huron water under construction in 2013, under then Emergency Manager Michael Brown. Ostensibly to save water in the interim, the city, then under Emergency Manager Darnell Earley, switched from Detroit water to the Flint River in April, 2014.

Soon after, residents began complaining about brown water and a multitude of physical symptoms. Water officials failed to use anti-corrosive chemicals for the river water, which is more corrosive than Lake Huron water, causing lead to leach out of the city's aging pipes and causing the blood lead levels of thousands in the city to climb into toxicity. The failure to add anti-corrosives, an Environmental Protection Agency(EPA)-required precaution which many have said would have cost less than \$200 a day, has been described as the single most direct cause for the lead-in-the-water

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“Where are the journalists?”

Part Three: Reporting on power as pixels replace paper

By Harold C. Ford

This three-part series, concluding with this installment, aims to explore, analyze, and lament how many forces challenging the Fourth Estate are playing out in our own community — specifically in a close look at changes in *The Flint Journal*, now dwindled to a local staff of fewer than 10 people, and subsumed by M-Live Media Group and Advance Publications, its corporate owner. We contend that as the whole of journalism struggles, its troubles triggered by the rise of the Internet, the parallel collapse of the “print” business model has hit local journalism hardest, and that could be said to have a devastating and even insidious effect on participatory democracy. This is why we think it matters. In this final installment, framing his research in a national and historical context, Harold Ford examines what is at stake as purveyors of local journalism attempt to speak truth to power, and what new models are emerging as a free press attempts to hold the powerful to account.

“After working for the *Guardian* for two decades, I feel I know instinctively why it exists. Most of our journalists and readers do, too — it has something to do with holding power to account ...”

—*Guardian* editor-in-chief

Katharine Viner.

Early 1800s Manchester

On Aug. 16, 1819, John Edward Taylor, a 28-year-old journalist, attended a massive demonstration for voter rights in Manchester, England. British militia stormed though the peaceful assemblage with sabers flailing, resulting in the deaths of seven men and four women and hundreds others wounded. Taylor stepped in for an arrested journalist to report on the atrocity. He told the stories of the powerless and held the powerful to account.

Taylor started his own newspaper, *The Manchester Guardian*, in 1821 with the modest financial support of other progressives. According to current *Guardian* editor-in-chief Katherine Viner, it was “devoted to enlightenment values, liberty, reform, and justice.” At times, the paper’s progressive stance was often so controversial that it lost advertisers and sales. “Clearly this was a paper that could not be bought,” judged historian David Ayerst.

By most accounts, *The Guardian* remains true to its founding principles to this day.

Early 1900s Flint

By 1900, Flint became known as “The Vehicle City” as annual production of 100,000 carriages, carts, and buggies transi-

tioned to automobiles. Billy Durant assumed ownership of the Buick Motor Company in 1904 and promptly raised \$500,000 from prominent bankers and industrialists to stabilize the company and build the world’s largest auto factory — 14 acres under one roof — on the near north side of Flint.

Durant lured Charles Stewart Mott and his Weston-Mott Co. to Flint to provide axles for Buicks. By 1910, the newly incorporated General Motors Company had acquired more than 30 other businesses; sales skyrocketed to nearly \$50 million.

Industrial expansion and rapid population growth also forced enormous social problems upon Flint: inadequate housing, rodent control, health care, education, sewage disposal, fire prevention, police protection, mass transit needs, and water supply. So it was that fabulous wealth and human misery converged in Flint in the early 1900s.



Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson
Current *Journal* storefront

Flint elects a Socialist mayor

Results of the three-way contest for Flint mayor on April 3, 1911, shocked business leaders as the Socialist candidate John Menton beat the Democrat and Republican candidates. The Socialists also elected to office nine other city and county officials.

The Socialists proposed to stamp out disease, clean up streets, improve parks, prevent fires, close blind pigs, create an office of electrical inspectors, improve garbage collection, provide for inspection of milk, and numerous other reforms. Pro-worker initiatives included an eight-hour work day, labor union meeting places, night schools for workers, better wages, improved safety in the factories, and mass transit to move workers to and from jobs.

Menton nominated African American George Artis to become police commissioner and lobbied to remove clubs from the hands of day patrolmen. He railed against war and slav-

ery and appointed a 25-member commission that included representatives from all crafts and professions to advise him on municipal matters.

Journal joins industrialists, bankers, major parties to throw out Menton

On Thursday, June 15, 1911, only 73 days after the election of Menton, ownership of *The Flint Daily Journal* passed to the Booth family; Ralph H. Booth succeeded Howard Fitzgerald who had directed the Journal for nine years. Fitzgerald wrote in a farewell editorial that, “It has been our ambition first to serve the news with absolute impartiality ...”

Impartial coverage of Flint politics ended immediately as *The Journal* launched a crusade to throw the Socialists out of power. The very next day, June 16, 1911, an anti-Socialist letter-to-the-editor was prominently featured at the top of page two with a headline screaming in all caps: “CRITICIZES THE SOCIALISTS/SAYS THEY ARE NOT GIVING WARD REPRESENTATION.”

This brand of yellow journalism continued throughout 1911, into the mayoral election of 1912, and beyond with screaming headlines above editorials and news articles like the following: “WHAT SOCIALISM WOULD DO TO THE WORKING CLASSES ... RELIGIOUS LIBERTY WOULD BE DESTROYED.”

And prior to the 1912 mayoral election, local Democrats and Republicans buried their differences and organized the Independent Citizens Party, which promptly nominated millionaire Mott to run for mayor. *Journal* headlines screamed support for Mott: “SENTIMENT FOR HIM IN THE FACTORIES GROWS STRONGER ... BELIEVE HE WILL BE WORKINGMAN’S FRIEND.”

The results of that 1912 mayoral election on on April Fools’ Day were profound:

- Mott defeated Menton, signaling the demise of the Socialists as a viable political force in Flint. Democrats and Republicans have dominated local government ever since.

- General Motors became Flint’s largest employer until present day. In 1955, GM employed 82,200 Flint-area workers. But today it employs less than 8,000.

- *The Flint Journal*, acquired by New York-based Advance Publications in 1976, became the only daily newspaper in Flint until 2009 when it transitioned to a digital-first platform and four-day delivery of a diminished print edition. The Journal and seven other metropolitan newspapers in Michigan remain part of the Advance corporate structure.

(*Editor’s note: A reprint of Harold C. Ford’s full report of the 1912 Flint mayoral*
(Continued on Page 7.)

... Journalists

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election, “The Year of Living Dangerously,” *Michigan Voice*, September 1983, is available online at eastvillagemagazine.org.)

A tale of two cities

Manchester’s *Guardian* and Flint’s *Journal* together pointedly demonstrate the power of the press in reporting on power. “We need a media that covers power, not covers for power,” wrote Amy Goodman of Democracy Now.

Pulitzer Prize journalist Glenn Greenwald could have channeled the *Journal*’s performance in Flint’s 1912 mayoral election when he wrote: “Nobody needed the US Constitution to guarantee press freedom so that journalists could befriend, amplify and glorify political leaders; the guarantee was necessary so that journalists could do the opposite.”



Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Empty racks at Olympic Diner

Paper to pixels

In 1999, A&E (Arts & Entertainment) released their list for the top 100 most influential people of the past 1000 years. Johann Gutenberg, who ignited mass media with development of movable type for printing in 1439, topped the list. “It played a key role in the development of the Renaissance, Reformation, the Age of Enlightenment, and the scientific revolution and laid the material basis for the modern knowledge-based economy and the spread of learning to the masses,” A&E’s editors declared.

After nearly 600 years of the Gutenberg era, mass media is entering a brave new world dominated by the Internet and its ability to transmit millions of information-laden pixels (picture elements) to millions of screens around the world in fractions of a second. The print model of the Fourth Estate is under siege as is the business model that has sustained it.

The *Guardian*’s Viner mused about this

transition in a recent essay:

“The transition from print to digital did not initially change the basic business model for many news organizations — that is, selling advertisements to fund the journalism delivered to readers. For a time, it seemed that the potentially vast scale of an online audience might compensate for the decline in print readers and advertisers. But this business model is currently collapsing, as Facebook and Google swallow digital advertising; as a result, the digital journalism produced by many news organizations has become less and less meaningful.”

Most current models of digital reporting are largely unsatisfying to consumers. “Readers are overwhelmed: bewildered by the quantity of ‘news’ they see every day, nagged by intrusive pop-up ads, confused by what is real and what is fake, and confronted with an experience that is neither useful nor enjoyable,” concluded Viner.

New thoughts, models, initiatives, hope

Viner advocated for “hopeful ideas, fresh alternatives, belief that the way things are isn’t the way things need to be. We cannot merely criticize the status quo; we must also explore the new ideas that might displace it. We must build hope.”

Break ‘em up: Jonathan Taplin, author of *Move Fast and Break Things: How Facebook, Google, and Amazon Cornered Culture and Undermined Democracy*, advocates that we break up the virtual modern monopolies that suck up billions of dollars in advertising revenue and undermine the industry of journalism. However, Taplin’s not optimistic that this would happen anytime soon: “The anti-trust divisions have been asleep since Reagan and I’m not sure under Trump they’re going to wake up.”

Paywalls: Ed Bradley, 20-year veteran at *The Flint Journal*, told *East Village Magazine (EVM)* that some publications are putting their content behind pay-to-read paywalls. They include *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation* magazine, and others. “The problem is,” according to Bradley, “that once the cat is out of the bag in terms of offering ... all of your Internet access for free, people are going to expect it for free, and if you retreat behind a paywall it’s likely not going to work.”

“What’s going on in the news business is a lot like what’s happening with music,” 42-year journalism vet Paul Steiger told *Time Magazine*. Free distribution of content over the internet has created “a total collapse of the business model.”

Reader contributions: On Aug. 5, 2017, residents in Saline, Mich., learned they were losing their local newspaper. Tran Longmoor was exhausted working seven-day weeks to produce *The Saline Post*, an online-only publication. He informed his readers that he did-

n’t generate sufficient revenue to continue the *Post*. Word spread and checks started coming in. Longmoor changed his mind and decided to continue publication. “Advertising, in the long run, isn’t going to fund journalism,” Longmoor told *Bridge Magazine*. “It’s going to have to be readers of journalism, like it was in the old days when people subscribed to newspapers.”

Readership-first: “I keep telling people in my business, the way that you grow is that you start with readership,” said Bruce McIntyre, *Oakland Press* publisher, 1977-1995. McIntyre told Birmingham-based *Downtown Publications*, “You start basically with the editorial side. You have to create a readership vehicle, and from that you sell circulation, and from that circulation you sell advertising ... You have to start with a product that people want to read, because if they don’t, forget the rest of it.”



Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Former Journal building

Advocacy journalism: Increasingly, advocacy organizations are putting more of their resources into print and electronic publications. Curt Guyette, investigative reporter for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Michigan, was the first person hired in that capacity by any ACLU state affiliate or branch. Guyette was named Journalist of the Year by the Michigan Press Association for his work in exposing Flint’s water crisis.

Though the ACLU strives to remain apolitical, most advocacy organizations and their publications are clearly positioned somewhere along the left-to-right political spectrum. Right-leaning *Breitbart News* and left-leaning *Daily Kos* are examples. The challenge for intelligent readers is to sort through the politics in search of objectivity and truth.

Nonprofit support: With increasing frequency, nonprofits are filling some of the void created by diminishment of the traditional press. *Bridge Magazine*, Michigan Press Association’s Newspaper of the Year two years running, was launched in 2011 by the nonprofit Center for Michigan, which is funded by dozens of foundations, civic organizations, and hundreds of individuals. In its short history, *Bridge Magazine* has garnered nearly a hun-

(Continued on Page 8.)

... Journalists

(Continued from Page 7.)

dred state and national journalism awards.

John Bellow, president and CEO of the Center for Michigan told *EVM*: “At *Bridge* we’re betting that future journalistic models look an awful lot like *Bridge* ... in-depth, non-profit, public service journalism rather than for-profit journalism that is, at times, in conflict with, or diminished by the profit motive ...”

(**Editor’s note:** In full disclosure, *EVM* is funded, in part, by a grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation.)

Citizen journalism/alternative publications: For more than a century, the journalistic landscape in Flint and other communities has been populated with alternative publications largely produced by citizen journalists for little or no pay. The first alternative publication in Flint may have been the Socialist-Labor publication, *Flint Flashes*, launched in 1910. It was renamed *Flint Weekly Review* in 1913.

In the early 1970’s *Freedom Reader*, funded by Grand Funk Railroad’s Mark Farner, focused on the anti-Vietnam War movement and Michigan’s rock & roll scene. Michael Moore’s *Free To Be* morphed into *The Flint Voice* and *Michigan Voice* in the 1970s and 1980s. More recently, *Uncommon Sense*, a nonprofit print publication started by Flint native Matt Zacks, flourished for a few years in the early 2000s. *Broadside*, run by Melody and Bob Mabbitt, operated as a tabloid from 2008 to 2014.

The current cottage industry of local alt-publications are, in part, filling space vacated by the diminishment of *The Flint Journal*. They include: *The Hub*; *FlintSide*; *Flint Beat*; *The Courier*; *My City*; and *Flint*

Our Community Our Voice.

This monthly publication, *East Village Magazine*, boasts a run of 41 years. Jan Worth-Nelson, *EVM*’s editor since 2015, has endeavored to anchor the magazine in meaningful investigative journalism. “*EVM*’s idea has been that a community needs ‘citizen journalists’ — folks whose lives are affected by what they write,” she said. “I want us to be fierce, unswayed, and irritable about political malarkey, and idealists about the redeeming potential of community life.”

Blogsphere: Blogs (a truncation of the term weblog) are discussion or informational websites published on the World Wide Web. The massive amounts of information transmitted via blogs is staggering. Just one blogging enterprise, Tumblr, boasted 379.8 million blogs and 155.3 billion posts as of Nov. 25, 2017. More than 550 million visits are made to Tumblr blog sites monthly. And Tumblr is not even the most popular blogging service.

The reliability and accountability of professional journalists is being replaced by an ocean of often anonymous bloggers with uncertain credentials and unproven track records. Despite the decline of newspapers, the vast majority of reporters and editors are products of journalism schools and have often devoted years and decades to their craft. One would be hard pressed, for example, to find anyone doing better reporting about Flint’s water crisis than *Journal* staffer Ron Fonger.

Collaboratives: Nationally, ProPublica describes itself as “an independent, nonprofit newsroom that produces investigative journalism with moral force.” It boasts a

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... Gerrymander

(Continued from Page 3.)

county lines. They should be as compact as possible and not spread out over a wide-ranging area.

Perhaps the most complex and controversial guideline given to the commission is that the maps must reflect Michigan’s diverse population and should respect “communities of interest” which are groups who share common cultural, historical, social or economic interests.

As desirable as it may be to protect groups that share common backgrounds, defining exactly what is meant by a “community of interest” may be the most difficult and challenging part of the process. Twenty-four other states have similar laws but a clear definition of a “community of interest” remains vague, as does the process for dealing with conflicting “communities of interest.”

In the end, the ballot proposal creates very specific guidelines and rules for assuring that the process is as fair as possible to all.

One of the most important and challenging tasks of the commission will be to balance the competing guidelines against each other as they try to create fair districts.

The ballot prospects

The Voters Not Politicians ballot committee has been gathering signatures to place the proposed amendment to the Michigan Constitution on the ballot in 2018. To the surprise of many, they are on track to collect the required number of signatures ahead of time. About 315,000 valid signatures are needed, and supporters already claim to have gathered 350,000 and expect to have over 400,000 by the end of the year.

The ballot drive has been remarkable in two ways. It’s been able to gather a large number of signatures in a very short time, and it’s done it without a cadre of paid workers, which most ballot initiatives use. Nearly all of the work was done by unpaid volunteers who are committed to end gerrymandering in Michigan. Many circulators report widespread support for the measure as they talk with voters and gather signatures. The Voters Not Politicians website offers much more detail on the proposal as well as the campaign itself. (www.votersnotpoliticians.com)

The critics

While the proposal has garnered much support in a brief time, it’s not universally popular. Some critics claim that most of the proposal’s advocates are Democrats and that, if implemented, the proposal would help the Democratic Party. Since the Republicans are the current beneficiary of the current gerrymandering, that is probably true. However, Democrats would be bound

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6-12 years	\$5
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18-61 years	\$12
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Official Training Center for the

... Gerrymander

(Continued from Page 8.)

by the same rules, and would be unable to gerrymander for themselves when they would be the majority in Lansing.

While gerrymandering is easy to condemn, the very complexity of the proposal has been criticized by some (mostly) Republican groups. The committee opposing the amendment is the Committee to Protect Voters Rights. They argue that the selection process puts too much power in the hands of the Michigan secretary of state, and that picking people at random will result in uninformed individuals making critical, complex decisions for the public.

Some point to the fact that Michigan, unlike most states, doesn't require individuals to register with a party when signing up to vote. So who is a Republican? Who is a Democrat? Republicans could claim to be Democrats and Democrats could claim to be Republicans. That fact has been a source of more than a little political mischief in the past, and the fear is that it could undermine the nonpartisan nature of the redistricting commission.

There will most likely be a legal challenge in the courts. The proposal, which runs eight pages of small type, would be one of the longest and most complex constitutional amendments to the Michigan Constitution, and would change 11 sections of the document. Some argue that it would amount to a wholesale revision of the Michigan Constitution, and thus should face a full constitutional convention before becoming law.

What other states are doing

Michigan is one of 37 states where a partisan legislature has the duty of creating new election districts every 10 years. It is considered one of the most gerrymandered. Seven states have commissions composed of politicians. Only six states have independent commissions that draw election districts, though some states are considering proposals similar to Michigan's. Some have commissions that can step in only when the legislature can't make a decision. California, Arizona, and Iowa are often considered the best examples of states having truly independent commissions. Michigan's proposal is modeled after California's. While the commissions in those three states work fairly well, they haven't been without controversy. With some regularity, the minority party complains (and files lawsuits) claiming the process is unfair.

Ballot proposals aren't the only attempts to end partisan gerrymandering. Next month's *East Village Magazine* will discuss the court challenges to the practice.

Maybe Einstein was right — politics is more difficult than physics.

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

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THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

“This Month” highlights a selection of interesting events available to our readers – beginning after our publication date of Dec. 7. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our January issue, email your event to Managing Editor Meghan Christian at meghan.christian22@gmail.com by Dec. 26.

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

Dec. 7 and Dec. 14:
10 a.m., 12:15 p.m.
Dec. 8 and Dec. 15:
10 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 7 p.m.
Dec. 9 and Dec. 16:
10 a.m., 12:15 p.m.
Dec. 10 and Dec. 17:
2 p.m.

Flint Institute of Music,
1025 E. Kearsley St.
810-238-1350
Admission: \$8-\$18

Come see the amazing adaptation of C.S. Lewis's classic book.

Yuletide Celebration of Song featuring Glen Holcomb (tenor) with special guests Cantabella Trio

Dec. 8: 1 p.m.

Flint Institute of Music,
1025 E. Kearsley St.
810-238-1350
Admission: Free

Enjoy an afternoon of holiday music.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical

Dec. 9:
2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The Whiting
1241 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-7333
Admission: \$30-\$50

Based on the classic holiday claymation, see your favorite characters brought to life on stage.

Queen Light Show: “From Mercury with Love”

Dec. 7-9, Dec. 14-16, Dec. 21-23,
Dec. 28-30:
8 p.m.

Longway Planetarium,
1310 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-3400
Admission: \$4-\$6

A dazzling light show featuring 10 of Queen's greatest hits.

Cosmic Christmas

Dec. 7-9:
4 p.m., 7 p.m.
Dec. 10-13:
4 p.m.
Dec. 14-16:
4 p.m., 7 p.m.
Dec. 17-20:
4 p.m.
Dec. 21-23:
4 p.m., 7 p.m.
Dec. 26 and Dec. 27:
4 p.m.
Dec. 28-30:
4 p.m., 7 p.m.

Longway Planetarium,
1310 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-3400
Admission: \$4-\$6

A Christmas-themed light show featuring 16 classics, new hits, and a few unique songs. Set to a 4K display, this is recommended for ages six and up. Flint Symphony Orchestra

Holiday Pops featuring Flint Symphony Orchestra

Dec. 16:
7 p.m.
Dec. 17:
3 p.m.

The Whiting
1241 E. Kearsley St.
810-237-7333
Admission: For ticket prices, call the number above.

Get a dose of holiday cheer with lovely music from the Flint Symphony Chorus under the direction of guest conductor Laura Jackson and featuring the Flint Symphony Orchestra.

Hops and Pops

Dec. 16:
5 - 9 p.m.

Flint Institute of Music
1025 E. Kearsley St.
810-238-1350
Admission: \$10-\$60 (for ticket breakdown, visit <http://thefim.org/events/hops-pops>)
MUST BE 21+ TO ATTEND

Can't make it to The Whiting for Holiday Pops, but still want to watch? Enjoy craft beer? Then come to Hops and Pops. Sample craft beer, delicious food and desserts, and watch the concert on the big screen. Event proceeds to benefit programs at the FIM.

VIP Admission to the event includes:
*Early Entry at 4:30 p.m.
Later stay until 10:30 p.m.
12 oz Pilsner glass
VIP exclusive beer
Food pairing event*

General Admission for the event includes:
*Tasting Glass
Five drink tickets
Food and desserts*

Tendaji Talks: Water Crisis: Systemic Racism

Dec. 19
6 p.m.
The New McCree Theatre
2040 W. Carpenter Rd.
810-845-1767
Admission: Free

A talk about the commissions report findings on the Water Crisis and how racism impacted those findings. Led by Michigan Civil Rights Commission Director Augustin Arbulu.

... Women

(Continued from Page 12.)

“What I know now is that the man I loved feared me,” the Rock Daughter says, “the way that patriarchy fears all the mysterious magical and sacred places, fears the feminine, fears any space where its narrow understanding of the world is challenged. Fear any space where it is forced to confront its own wounds and heal.”

And in the water crisis, they see that “the courageous women stepping forward to call out the unclear, unclean and lead-poisoned water represent, in effect, a prison break, an escape of the feminine from its captivity within the patriarchy.

“The truth is, it will be my daughters who will save me,” the Rock Daughter says, “my daughters, made of bedrock and courage, came to me ... one by one ... as grassroots activists,



Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson

Natasha Thomas-Jackson and Steve Wilson

artists, teachers, mothers, healers, caretakers, stewards, lovers, conjurers, rebels, and warriors.

“Mother Flint, they said, ‘The feminine hurt is an ancient hurt. Your collapse, your poisoning is the story of every place, every person, that has been persecuted, sacrificed, raped, exploited, maimed, sterilized, beaten, imprisoned, colonized, burned at the stake, hung from trees, enslaved, forced into internment and concentration camps, or denied full humanity.’

“But, Mother, we will not let the story keep ending this way,” the Rock Daughter promises.

Quoting author Jonathan Lear, Thomas-Jackson and Wilson declare their belief in “radical hope” which “anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate conception to understand it.”

“We both watched radical hope play out in the streets of Flint over the past three years,” they write.

Thomas-Jackson, a Flint native who now lives in Davison, is a writer, activist, performance artist, and co-founder and executive director of RaiseItUp (RIU), a sensationally successful Flint-based youth arts and awareness nonprofit organization that according to its website, “promotes engagement, expression, and empowerment through performance, literary art

and social activism.” The youthful social activists and poets of RIU have been featured in PBS Newshour, the Huffington Post, New York Magazine and at many conferences nationwide.

Wilson, of Grand Rapids, grew up in Flint. He was head of the Convention and Visitors’ Bureau featured painfully in Michael Moore’s 1989 “Roger and Me.” Later he was president of the Ruth Mott Foundation, and now, president of the Frey Foundation. His mother and sister still live in Flint and he returns often to play drums in a garage band with old friends.

With the subtitle, “A Feminist Exploration of the Flint Water Crisis,” Thomas-Jackson and Wilson said their narrative and analysis fit in well at the “Seeing Red” conference sponsored by the Assisi Institute. The institute, which describes itself as an “international center for the study of archetypal patterns,” is built around the work of psychologist Carl Jung. Long interested in Jung’s work, Wilson had recently completed a certificate in Jungian analysis through the Institute, and when he and Thomas-Jackson saw the call for submissions for the October conference, they thought their ideas might find a receptive audience.

The purpose of “Seeing Red” was, according to its website, “Illuminating the archetypal roots of feminine oppression through a deep integration of the analytic and artistic in order to give voice and image to authentic identities of women.” Wilson said he and Thomas-Jackson were told their proposal was “the best they’d ever received.”

“Truth is like a lion,” the two write, quoting an old proverb. “You don’t have to defend it. Set it free and it will defend itself.” Thomas-Jackson and Wilson say they passionately hope their “Rock Daughter” of Flint might powerfully capture that liberation in action.

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

Pipes replaced so far in Flint: 5,854

Source: Nov. 28 press release from Kristin Moore, public relations director, City of Flint

Lead-tainted service lines at 4,955 homes have been replaced so far in Phase 4 of the city’s FAST Start program, which aims to replace pipes at 6,000 homes in 2017. That brings the total of residential pipe replacements so far to 5,854, with numbers changing every day.

The city aims to have all of Flint’s lead-tainted service lines — nearly 20,000 — replaced by 2020.

... Journalists

(Continued from Page 7.)

team of more than 50 reporters and editors dedicated to investigative journalism. Its list of partner organizations numbers about 100 and includes the BBC, Yahoo!News, USA Today, 60 Minutes, Slate, Politico, PBS Frontline, The Washington Post, NPR, and The Detroit News.

More locally, the Detroit Journalism Cooperative describes itself as “a partnership of five media outlets reporting on the city’s future after bankruptcy with stories that have never been told before ...” Members of the Cooperative include Detroit Public TV, Michigan Radio, WDET, New Michigan Media, Bridge Magazine, and Chalkbeat Detroit, a partnership of ethnic and minority newspapers.

Reporting on the powerful

In his 2004 book “The Vanishing Newspaper,” author Philip Meyer predicts that the final copy of the final newspaper will appear on somebody’s doorstep one day in 2043. If that’s so, then to whom will fall the responsibility of reporting on the powerful? It’s arguably the most important function of a free press. How shall the future Bob Woodwards and Carl Bernsteins serve their nation?

Writer Julie Nelson reflected on journalism’s future in the Oct. 16, 2017, issue of The Nation:

“Ultimately, it may be a mix of altruistic investors, nonprofits, involved local owners, and citizen demand that keeps ... news alive. Whether that news is printed on paper or pushed to smartphone isn’t nearly as important as society’s willingness to invest in the act of reporting itself — an act central to our founders’ vision of democracy.”

EVM Contributing Writer Harold C. Ford can be reached at hcford1185@gmail.com.

Editor’s Note: Multiple overtures were made by EVM to solicit the views of current staff and management at MLive/The Flint Journal for this series. Gary Ridley, “news leader” (apparently what might have once have been called editor) of MLive/The Flint Journal at the Flint office, forwarded our requests to Clark Hughes, interim regional manager of the Flint Journal, Saginaw News and the Bay City Times; he forwarded our requests to John Hiner, MLive vice president of content. On Sept. 26, we received this response from Hiner: “Thanks for your interest in the changes at The Flint Journal over the years. After reviewing the questions, I think it’s best to let our journalism speak for itself.”

Village Life

Women of the Water Crisis inspire a new myth

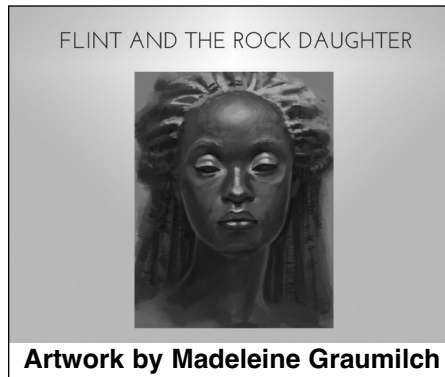
By Jan Worth-Nelson

“Mother Flint, my daughters said, we will be your courageous truth tellers ... Mother we are your bedrock daughters, your breathing water, and your living fire. We will not rest until you are restored. Until you are healed. We are your radical hope.”

-Natasha Thomas-Jackson, “Flint and the Rock Daughter”

The Flint Water Crisis has poisoned children, created physical and economic chaos, caused political and social upheaval, desecrated trust, and imposed upon the city many heartaches.

But for one team of creative dynamos with deep Flint roots, out of the crisis – and in particular because of the women water warriors who emerged to powerfully challenge “patriarchal systems” – something different has flowered: a new myth offering basic truths not just for the



Artwork by Madeleine Graumilch

troubled city, but for the nation and the earth.

“Flint and the Rock Daughter,” part poetry, part scholarly prose, part performance art, part ecofeminism, and part psychological analysis, was created in a collaboration between writer, spoken word artist and executive director of “RaiseItUp,” Natasha Thomas-Jackson, 35, and creative writer, musician and foundation administrator Steve Wilson, 66. They presented their formulation of the myth, including a spoken word piece performed by Thomas-Jackson, recently at a conference called “Seeing Red,” sponsored by the Assisi Institute in Mystic, Conn.

As creative artists, both are interested in myths, which they describe as “the purest and simplest expressions of the collective unconscious.” They simultaneously found inspiration in Flint literally as “a hard sedimentary rock, a crystalline form of quartz that when struck against steel will ignite a spark.”

And in a small unlikely city named for that rock, they say, “a spark ignited the emergence of (what they call) the collective Feminine with a powerful chorus of feminine voices heard around the world.”

For both, the Flint water crisis painfully hit home, and “Flint and the Rock Daughter” is personal.

Both say they are deeply motivated by issues of gender justice and women’s empowerment.

And they say they believe that the oppression of “The Feminine,” what they describe as “earth-based, nature-based, the yin/yang,” in stark contrast with General Motors corporate culture of the ‘70s, ‘80s and ‘90s, for example, is part of what laid down damage leading to the water crisis.

In thinking about the city and its travails, Thomas-Jackson and Wilson were startled by the relevance of an early 13th century myth, “The Rape of the Well Maidens,” from a French mythic poem called “The Elucidation,” in which after the keepers of the water, the Well Maidens, are raped, the kingdom falls into ruins for generations.

They noted the significance of the point, from a 2014 essay on ecofeminism by John Halstead, that “despoiling of the Earth and the subjugation of women are intimately connected.”

“It is not a coincidence that when women are raped, the land becomes parched and desolate, and when feminine qualities are oppressed, the human mind is cut off from participation in mystery and left with a disenchanting world,” Halstead wrote.

In that myth, however, a kind-hearted King Arthur swoops in to save the day, taking healthy positive action to reverse the course of life in the kingdom for the Well Maidens and their offspring. But Thomas-Jackson and Wilson note that classic fairy tale happy ending “never really rings with authenticity.”

In Flint, on the contrary, it was the “Well Maidens,” the water warriors themselves, who saved (and are saving) the day, after betrayal by patriarchal forces--“a very different ending than waiting for male benevolence to provide the needed turn of events.”

“We weren’t saved by The Man,” Thomas-Jackson says. “Those women, who weren’t scientists, who made themselves into scientists because they had to — they were who saved us.”

“He spoke and I felt like everything,” Thomas-Jackson’s Rock Daughter says. “The man of industry could make me new ... but things were not shiny like he said they would be ... all these promises made by the industry man swelled into something monstrous and unchecked ... and I began to bleed.”

“This narrative uniquely recreates the history of legends of the city of Flint along with compelling portraits of the courageous Flint women who gathered their collective energies to fight the patriarchy, bringing safety and finding solutions during a disaster — a man-made disaster,” Thomas-Jackson and Wilson write.

They contend that what happened in Flint is “another harbinger of the individual and collective desecration that occurs when we forget that our psyches, homes, communities, nations and worlds will not heal so long as we forget to understand, value, respect and integrate the immense strength, keen intelligence, and leadership of the Divine Feminine.” Building on the idea of the earth as mother, they point, for example, to the concrete walling off of the Flint River by GM downtown as a brutal violation.

(Continued on Page 11.)

LV: 12 (655 issues, 6,583 pages)

DREYS

By Grayce Scholt

**Today I learned that there’s a drey,
a squirrel’s nest, atop my walnut tree,
high up, way off the ground,
with walnuts handy
down below,**

**or maybe it’s not a squirrel’s nest at all.
Could be a mother possum’s drey
where nineteen, twenty babies
swell her warm marsupium, her pouch,
vying for her thirteen teats of life:**

**winners live, losers die
and so it goes.**

**I saw a possum only once,
silent, white, astride the gable end
of our old porch
peering into night’s dark deep,
then beginning its descent, so languid,
slow, flowing into what it was
that was
below.**

Grayce Scholt is a retired English professor from Mott Community College who wrote art reviews for the Flint Journal and has authored several poetry collections and memoirs. Her newest collection is East of Everywhere, drawn in part from work published in East Village Magazine. The book is available from Friesen Press, www.friesenpress.com and Amazon.