CCM-101

City of Cambridge

R-79.

IN CITY COUNCIL

September 13, 1999

COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
COUNCILLOR BORN
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
MAYOR DUEHAY
VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

WHEREAS: Scott Thibeau of Cambridge, was a contestant in the Marshfield Fair's demolition derby on August 20, 1999; and

WHEREAS: Scott's car was a black and red Oldsmobile LeSabre; and

WHEREAS: Scott finished the derby in the top five out of a field of twenty; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record extending its congratulations to Scott Thibeau for his excellent placement in his first derby; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Scott Thibeau on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council September 13, 1999.
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- D Margaret Drury

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

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Councillor Tormey
of Cambridge

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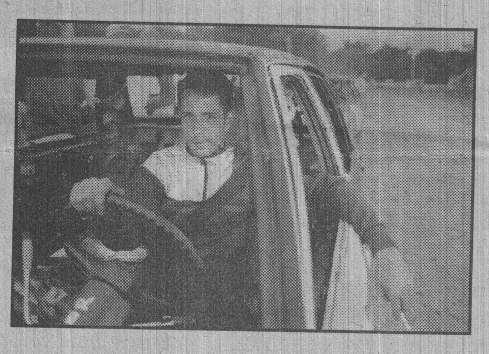
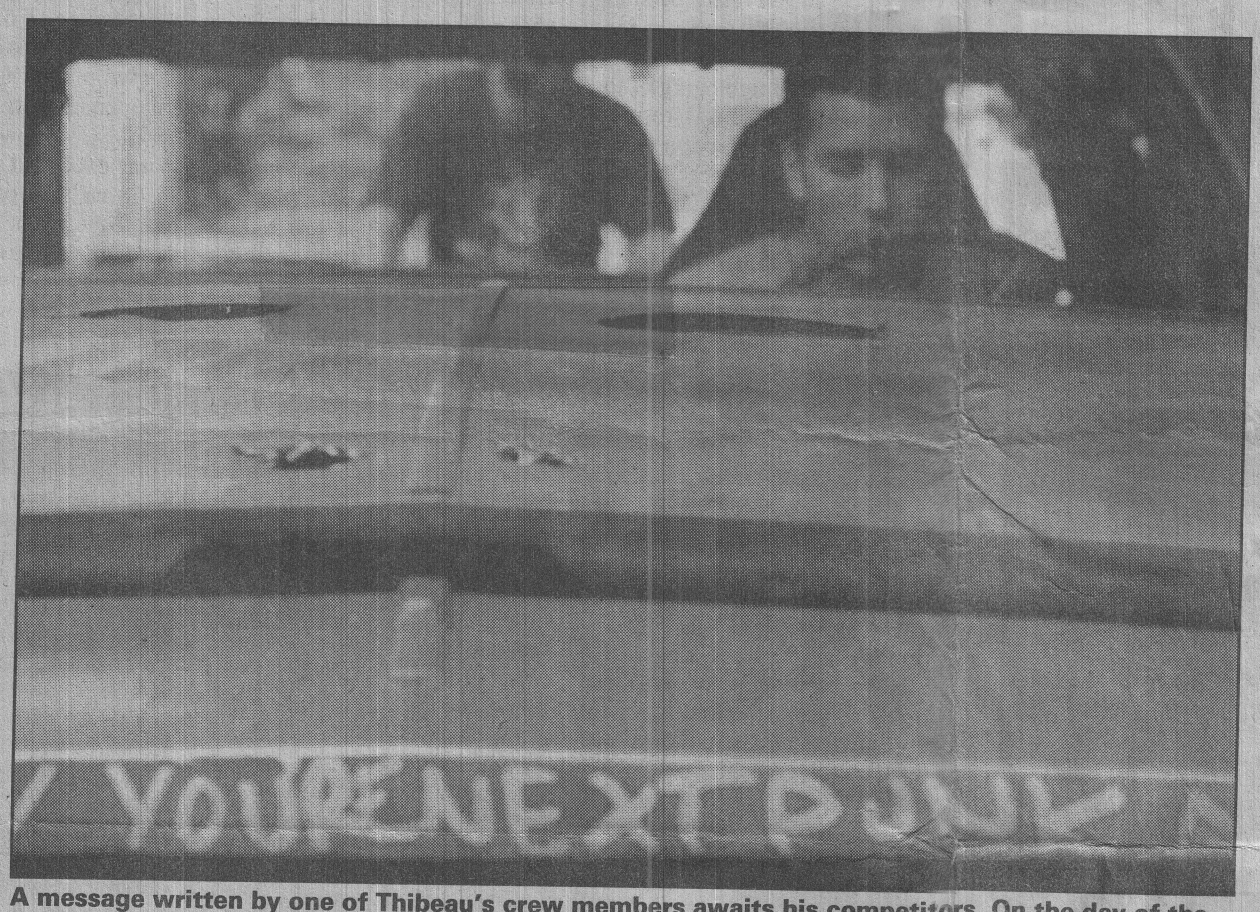
Resolved SEC'D Scott.

Tommy - Congrats



Demolition Man



A message written by one of Thibeau's crew members awaits his competitors. On the day of the derby, Thibeau pulls the car out of the Allston backyard where it was prepared.

For years considered entertainment solely for rural folks taking in a country fair, the demolition derby has recently started to attract a crowd of young, urban enthusiasts. Often referred to as "bumper cars for adults," the derby may be one of America's original extreme sports.

The premise is simple — smash into opponents' cars until there's only one vehicle still able to drive.

Scott Thibeau, 25, of Cambidge said he has always been the "guinea pig" of his group of friends, and when the idea of competing in the demolition derby at this year's Marshfield Fair came up, he was the natural choice to get behind the wheel.

Thibeau, his crew chief Justin Zavislak, 26, of Jamaica Plain, and a bunch of friends spent weeks preparing an old Oldsmobile LeSabre another friend had donated for the adventure. Meticulously following the competition's detailed rules, they broke out all the windows, chained up the gas tank, ripped out all of the car's interior except for the driver's seat and reworked the car's coolant and fueling systems.

With a menacing new red and black paint job, Thibeau accelerated his car into the thick of the pack last Friday night, smashing cars without an ounce of hesitation. Although he didn't win his heat, Thibeau made an excellent showing in his first derby. He finished in the top five out of a field of 20.

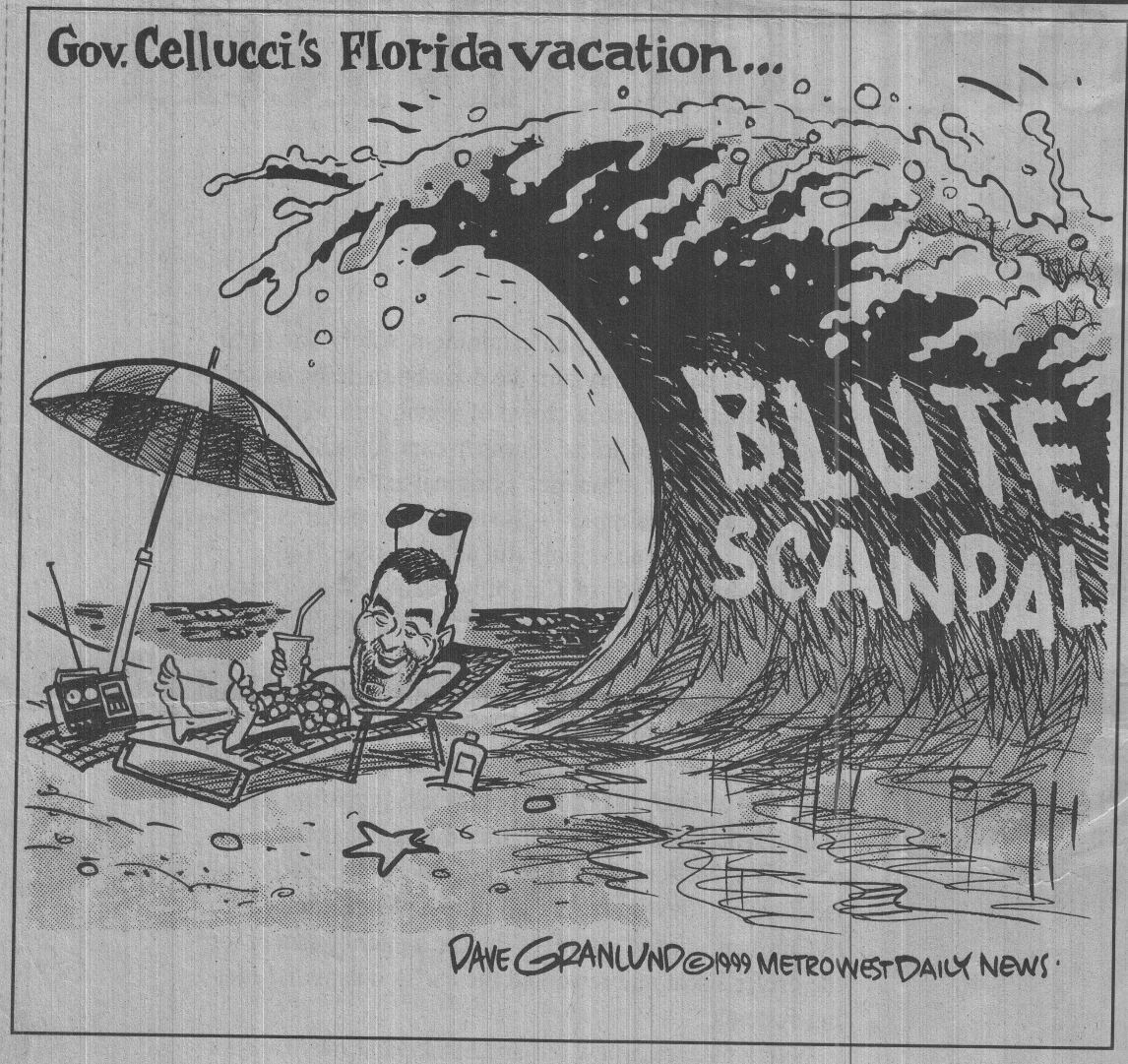
Hardly shy in his first demolition derby, Thibeau, in car number 43, smashes into the rear fender of another vehicle.

Thibeau gets showered with champagne after finishing fourth in his field of 20 cars.

After the derby, Thibeau gets a kiss from Suzette Sundae, 25, of Allston.

PHOTOS BY JIM WALKER

THE CAMBRIDGE SLANT



Elders lend knowledge to park spiels

BY RICHARD GRIFFIN

Joe Hardman, in retirement, works as a volunteer guide at the Wright Brothers National Park in Kitty Hawk, N.C. There, before large groups of visitors, he explains how Orville and Wilbur Wright in 1903 became the first people to take flight in a motor-driven, heavier-than-air flying machine.

The subject is fascinating in itself. Two Ohio bicycle-shop mechanics who dreamed of human flight managing to pull it off and achieving undying reputations. But Joe makes it all the more compelling as he shares with people of all ages this typically American story.

As a tourist myself last week, I listened to Joe with fascination. Afterward I asked this 70-year-old how he had acquired such knowledge. "They gave me a 5-foot shelf of books," he explained. In other words, his was no canned speech repeated over and over; rather, he had studied his subject and mastered it enough to talk about a wide variety of materials and to answer a broad range of questions.

In his earlier career, Joe told me, he had been a foreign service officer for the United States and then a manager of the Fulbright program in the federal education department. So he brings much experience and sophistication to his volunteer position in Kitty Hawk. No wonder he carries off his teaching role with such aplomb.

Joe Hardman, though outstanding for his competence, was only one of several elder citizens whom my wife and I encountered on this vacation trip. At Antietam, the Civil War battle site, we found a similarly well-qualified guide in Gary Delphey. This gentleman told me that he is a retired bank officer who now contributes his time to public service.

From a position on a porch looking out over the fields where

the Union and Confederate armies clashed repeatedly in 1862, this seasoned guide explained the ebb and flow of the battle. Inevitably, the other listeners and I visualized the strategy of Robert E. Lee and the countermoves of Union General McClellan. Even though my sympathies were with the North, I thrilled to the crucial intervention of General A. P. Hill, who forcemarched his troops from Harpers Ferry, and saved the day for the rebels.

> *"They strike a brilliant contrast with the spiels of the past, parroted by guides who knew precious little about their subject."*

At Gettysburg, veteran guides abounded. Though our tour around miles of battlefield took place in our own car, before setting out we noted the human resources available. I remember asking one man of mature years who was dressed in a National Park Service uniform if he was a volunteer. His one-word answer amused me: "Almost."

At Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's magnificent home near Charlottesville, Va., our guide was Bess Kane, a woman who possessed detailed knowledge both about the house and its owner. The range and sophistication of her lore impressed me.

What a welcome change all of these superb talks represent! They strike a brilliant contrast with the spiels of the past, parroted by guides who knew precious little about their subject.

But I suspect there may be more to it than that. It seems to me that the guides we encountered on our vacation tour are people who love their country's history and wish to pass it on to others, young and old. They have imbued themselves with the events of America's past and have come to value what we as a nation have experienced on our way through history.

Though they approach their official duties seriously, they seem to go beyond mere duty and take pleasure in sharing with others the knowledge they have acquired through study and reflection. In doing so, they have assumed a role in society that befits older people. Not only do they pass on a tradition vital to our common life, but they also offer some evaluation of that history, letting us know what is important and why.

In doing so on a large public stage before huge numbers of people who come from all over this country and, indeed, the world, these guides help us lay more secure hold of our traditions. They help bring to vivid life the pages of history books that previously may have remained dry documents for us.

These veteran guides also help us flesh out the folktales that we learned long ago, correct them, and give them a local habitation and a name. And they seem to relish what they are doing. Gary Delphey, the Antietam guide, told me of his pleasure: "I enjoy it. It's the least I can do for those fellows who sacrificed so much so long ago."

Richard Griffin is a Cambridge resident and Community Newspaper Company senior columnist.

Blow away the smog

The Sport Utility Vehicle craze has driven up some major profits for the world's automakers. They have also driven up the frequency and severity of smog alerts in the nation's major cities.

Thanks to the tightening of the state's environmental regulations — to go in effect on Oct. 1 — automakers will now have to invest some of those hefty profits toward reducing the amount of pollution belched out of the gas-guzzling SUVs.

The change is badly needed.

The best evidence is the doubling of "unhealthy air days" reported by the state's Department of Environmental Protection this summer compared to last summer. That means a lot more wheezing for asthmatics and other sufferers of lung disease on hot summer days.

Gov. Cellucci's approval of the revamped regulations forces SUVs, light trucks and minivans to meet the toughest-in-the-nation California emission requirements by 2004. The changes may force automakers to hike prices a few hundred dollars. That cost is relatively minor since SUVs are already among the costliest vehicles on the market — with many sticker prices starting near $20,000 and higher.

The price is cheap compared to the value of clean air.

The older regulations are an anachronism. Policy makers assumed this bulkier fleet of vehicles would be used mostly for commercial purposes. The number of SUVs now on the road has so far exceeded this assumption — 68 million or one for every four Americans — to allow the more lax regulations to continue.

Maybe soon with every deep breath, people will exhale comfortably instead of coughing up a mouthful of smog.

LETTERS

'New Cambridge' not missed

The story in the Aug. 12 edition written by Lisa Kocian regarding the demise of rent control four years ago and its effect on the city and its policies was most enlightening.

Having been born and raised in Cambridge, I found the story to be proof positive that my hometown, once known for its diversity and its bohemian element, has been taken over by yuppie carpetbaggers and wealthy Europeans.

The ending of rent control did, and rightly so, give land owners control of their property. Bravo.

But ending rent control, without putting something in its place to help poor people, destroyed the fabric of old ethnic neighborhoods, driving out families that once made Cambridge special.

The Italian, Hispanic, Greek, Haitian, Portuguese and black families that once made my hometown a model for multiculturalism and intellectualism have been shoved aside for a new breed of Cantabrigians that [believe] it's "embarrassing" to see homeless people linger about in Harvard Square, as one person stated in Kocian's story.

Homelessness is not embarrassing. It's a social problem caused by a wide range of problems such as poverty, mental illness, and drug and alcohol abuse. It's a problem that needs to be seen so it can be fixed. What is embarrassing is this so-called new breed of Cantabrigian can't see homelessness as a social problem. How sad, because us old breed born and raised in Cambridge certainly do.

I miss my old hometown and I miss my old friends. But I certainly don't miss this new Cambridge. I hope my parents, who still live and labor in Cambridge, move out soon.

DAVID RIVERA
Torrington, Conn.

Police teachings resented

Shame on the Cambridge Police Department for their ignorance and insensitivity towards Americans of Mexican descent.

To teach cadets that so-called pepper spray has no effect on Mexican Americans shows the nation what future police officers are being taught.

Mr. Frank Gutoski, Frank Pasquarello, police commissioner, why don't you do a little research and see how Mexican Americans have fought valiantly for our country in all of its wars, including Vietnam, and no we did not run to Canada like so many did to avoid fighting in Vietnam. We went.

As a sixth-generation American, I strongly resent your comments and your teachings. Grow up.

JOE OLIVAS
El Paso, Texas

Break the school pattern

Thank goodness for Denise Simmons.

In your article about the school's controlled choice program (Aug. 12), Ms. Simmons was the only one willing to speak the truth about the cause of the breakdown of this program. As Ms. Simmons plainly said, "It's about the quality of education." She is right. Until Cambridge deals with the uneven quality of its schools, wealthier (and usually white) families will continue to work the system to avoid certain schools.

The School Committee perpetuates the syndrome of socioeconomic imbalance by allowing the so-called "hardship" appeals. These hardship appeals encourage parents to spend energy getting their children out of a school rather than trying to improve that school. If families had to stay at the school they were assigned to, there would be more incentive for them to work with that school to improve it.

Anybody close to the schools is aware that some of the city's schools perform consistently better than others. For the most part, the better schools have a larger percentage of wealthier families. When a school improves, larger numbers of middle-income and upper-income families choose that school.

The Morse is a perfect example of how a school's demographics change as it improves. Cambridge, of all places, should be able to break the nationwide pattern of lower-quality schools serving lower-income families.

To remedy the problems in the school choice program, the School Committee must first end the "hardship" campaign of wealthier families. More importantly, to end the disparity in the quality of the schools, Cambridge residents, the School Department and the School Committee must look closely at the schools who are not performing as well as the others. What is it about these schools that is causing their low performance? Can they be better managed? Do they need more family involvement? Do they need better teachers? With one of the highest per-pupil expenditures in the state, funding is not a problem, but the way that money is spent may be.

We will continue to have problems with the school choice program until some people in this city (the School Committee, parents, teachers, CUE, business owners, the teachers union, Harvard, MIT, or even School Committee candidates) are brave enough to publicly acknowledge that some of our schools are worse than others and openly deal with how to improve those schools.

BEN LUMMIS
Walden Street

No butts

With all of the debate raging about the dangers of second smoke and where it is and isn't appropriate to smoke, important as that debate is, little is being done about the hundreds of thousands of used cigarettes lining Cambridge sidewalks, gardens, and other public areas.

This isn't a smoker/non-smoker issue, but rather a concern for anyone who respects the environment and the communities they live and work in. Cigarettes are not biodegradable, as a quick downward glance on any Cambridge sidewalk will affirm.

Littering in Cambridge, like most communities, is against the law, and punishable by fine. The city enforces laws, which encourage residents and visitors to clean up after their pets, obey safe bicycling regulations, shovel their sidewalks, and otherwise show regard for the community and those they share it with.

I am waiting for the city to get the word out about cigarette litter. I think few smokers would continue to be so thoughtless with their cigarettes if there were greater awareness on the issue. Pocket ashtrays can be ordered from the nonprofit organization Keep America Beautiful. Cigarette butts can also be stored in empty film canisters, empty Altoid mint containers, etc.

There is no good reason, ever, to litter them on the ground.

WALTER LAMB
Cambridge

Development needs common sense

It is interesting to me that the Cambridge Chronicle could find nobody outside of the big money developers and their coterie at the city Department of Community Development (a misnomer if there ever was one) who seem to be in favor of the proposed development for Lechmere and the park in Lafayette Square.

Could it be that this is so because the only "community" Community Development develops is that of money and power? Seems to me from my own experiences in the Central Square and Lafayette Square development processes that any meeting with the neighbors and businesses affected is merely a sop and an excuse to ratify a fait accompli.

Any changes that come from such meetings are cosmetic and inconsequential because the plans are already finalized and finalized beyond the hearing of any voices from the street or the sidewalk.

Craig Kelley's letter to the editor in the same issue about trying to save the median strip on Mass. Ave. in Porter Square is just another example of the same old same old.

Last week I read Jane Jacob's "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" and am amazed at how little of her common sense has made it into practice even though her rhetoric of "community involvement" lards over every landgrab and money clutch going.

GEORGE MOKRAY
Franklin Street

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Attention letter writers

The Chronicle welcomes letters to the editor. To be published, letters must be signed and include the writer's address and daytime telephone number for verification. It should be clearly marked "letter to the editor" and should be **no more than 400 words**.

The newspaper reserves the right to edit for grammar, accuracy and libel, and to reject letters which do not conform to the above policy. Due to the volume of letters received, we cannot guarantee that all letters will appear.

The deadline for inclusion in each week's paper is Monday at noon. Fax them to 629-3381, or mail to: Letters to the Editor, Cambridge Chronicle, 240A Elm St. Suite 20, Somerville, MA 02144.

Election season letter policy

The Chronicle accepts letters to the editor on a variety of topics.

With the campaign season upon us, many writers will address issues important to Cambridge voters. Writers should reserve their comments to just that — the issues.

The Chronicle will not accept letters endorsing candidates for election to public office. The proper avenue for endorsing a candidate in the Chronicle is via paid advertising.

Such inquiries should be directed to advertising representative Ed Siegal at 781-433-8253.

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COUNCILLOR TOOMEY

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RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Scott Thibeau on behalf of the entire City Council.

Resolution #79 972R

Councillor Toomey re: Congratulations to Scott Thibeau for his excellent placement in his first demolition derby.

In City Council September 13, 1999

ORDER ADOPTED