

# Ted Here.....by Ted Almen

‘An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.’

Called a proverb, these words were written by Founding Father Benjamin Franklin in 1736 in reference to the susceptibility to fire that faced a young city of Philadelphia. For any good planner, asking the ‘what if’ questions are part of the strategy, and preparing ahead of time lessens the blow when things go wrong.

Dr. Michael Osterholm has been asking that ‘what if’ question. In a radio interview last week he expressed his dismay at Congress which has deleted funding for extending research into various pandemic-capable viruses. Out of sight, out of mind.

Four years ago at about this time the nation and world were dealing with the beginnings of a devastating world-wide spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Schools and businesses were shut down as people tried to avoid contracting this new strain for which at the time there was no defense other than isolating. Scientists worked feverishly to fast-track a vaccine, and something that normally takes years was on the market and offered free to the public in the span of a year.

This is not to say that vaccines for coronaviruses weren’t in the works. In fact there had been years of research into this science for other related viruses, and this work helped speed the process of developing what became known as the covid vaccine.

Still, even with that accomplished, COVID-19 continues to kill people. Many who die have not been vaccinated for one reason or another. Sadly, some of those reasons are based on fallacy. Conspiracy-theorists have led people to believe that the vaccine was a way for the government to track them, that it will alter one’s DNA, that it will make them sterile. Hogwash on all of this. The covid vaccine was developed under the usual stringent guidelines of such work, and was rigorously tested on thousands of people in clinical trials. According to Andrew Bradley, a doctor and vaccine expert at a little place called the Mayo Clinic, most of the rush in getting the covid vaccine to the public involved the paperwork.

To this day, COVID-19 is responsible for no less than seven million deaths around the world. A high percentage of the deaths are attributed to those who

continue, against all reason, to refuse life-preserving vaccination.

But that isn’t where I’m going with this. Vaccination is a personal decision, the same as it is whether to smoke, or over-drink or eat, or make other lifestyle choices with potentially negative consequences. Making sure there is a vaccine -- or at least making headway on one -- for when the next pandemic rears its ugly head is much more than that. It’s for a public good, and it’s that ounce of prevention earlier mentioned.

As Dr. Osterholm pointed out, the COVID-19 virus was very transmissible, but not particularly virulent. The death rate was “only” about one and a half percent of the people who came down with the disease, he said. Mind you, the World Health Organization says that is still over seven million people worldwide. But other viruses such as SARs and MERs have killed between 10 to 35 percent of those infected. Fortunately those strains, so far, have been much less contagious. As we’ve just seen in a recent story about avian influenza passing from bird to goat, these things mutate. When that happens, watch out.

As Osterholm pointed out, money spent on research now will pay big dividends later. It’s short-sighted for us to pretend it won’t happen, especially so when history has proven that it can and will. Osterholm is correct in suggesting that this science needs to be a national priority... not just when there is a pandemic, but now and on-going in our new reality.

Something that Dr. Osterholm mentioned in this particular interview should make this notion crystal clear. Do you know, he said, that one of the best trained and maintained fire departments in Minnesota is stationed at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport? They are there for the highly unlikely event of an airplane crash. Want to guess how many such crashes that department has handled?

If you said ‘none,’ you are correct. But that doesn’t mean that the MSP International Airport Fire Department will be getting any less funding, any less equipment, any less training than if they went on 10 calls a day. When that one call comes, they must be prepared.

And that’s what planning for the ‘what if’ is all about.

## OTHER VOICES

### Foreign-born workforce helping to fill the gap

by Albert Lea Tribune

Out of a growing need to explore strategies to expand the state’s workforce, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development last month drew attention to the increase in foreign-born residents who have moved into the region in the last decade and the potential these individuals have in alleviating labor shortages.

A labor market analyst studied trends within this population since 2010.

According to the 2018-2022 American Community Survey, southeast Minnesota is home to about 36,000 foreign-born individuals, an increase of almost 10,000 people in 2022 compared to 2010, bringing the number of foreign-born people in southeastern Minnesota to almost 36,000.

These individuals made up

6.9% of the total population in the region in 2022, according to the survey.

In southeast Minnesota, Olmsted County had the largest number of foreign-born residents in 2022, making up 11.2% of its total population. Close behind was Mower County with 11.1%. Foreign-born residents made up 4.9% of Freeborn County’s total population.

Freeborn County saw a 55.1% increase — or an increase of 537 foreign-born people — from 2010 to 2022, while Mower County saw an increase of 67.8% or 1,801 residents in the same period.

Specifically, the American Community Survey estimated Freeborn County in 2022 had 1,512 foreign-born residents, while Mower County had 4,459.

That is not insignificant. The Department of Employment and Economic De-

velopment went on further to illustrate how the foreign-born population as a whole right now has a younger age distribution than the overall population, with 61% of the immigrant population falling in the prime working age range of 25 to 54. When looking at the total population, only 36% is within that same age range, especially with the retirement of Baby Boomers.

We have seen some area businesses take advantage of this opportunity to attract these workers by making an extra effort to reach out to these communities, and we urge others to join in.

These workers are filling a gap in workers in the area, and they will only continue to do so in the coming years. These individuals have a variety of backgrounds, and with that can bring in diverse knowledge and skill to the workforce.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### More than one way to preserve historic buildings

To the Editor;

I read a news story recently on Willmarradio.com regarding the possible demolition of the Sabin Murdock House. The line of the story that caught my attention was, “There are also concerns that some of the interior work done during a rehab project in the 1980s did not meet the specifications in order to remain in the National Register of Historic Places.” As a former National Register reviewer for the state of Ohio, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the state of the Sabin Murdock House, and about the National Register of Historic Places, a designation that is often misunderstood.

Usually, the only ways that a property on the National Register can get removed is if a property was destroyed,

moved to a different location, or if recent alterations made were so drastic that the property no longer had historic integrity. From a historic preservation standpoint, interiors are generally less important than exteriors. A property could have historic integrity if it had an intact floor plan. In addition, many alterations are also reversible, and relatively inexpensive to remove. Rehabilitation and restoration are generally less expensive alternatives to demolition and new construction. Empty lots and demolitions can harm property values while loss of a historic building takes away a community’s sense of place.

So what would be the best approach to saving the Sabin Murdock House? Put it on the market. There are thousands of private residences on the National Register, as well as

thousands of locally-owned businesses that still operate. If the building is used for a business, there are tax credits available for National Register-listed properties to help offset costs of a rehabilitation project.

The historic building could be a privately-owned property, but it should be under a covenant to protect its integrity. A covenant would be established through a city ordinance, and it would provide meaningful and lasting protection to a building, even if it changes ownership. A building like the Sabin Murdock house cannot be replaced. It would be heart-breaking to see this building disappear.

Regards  
Ross Nelson  
Delaware, Ohio  
(formerly of Murdock)

### Much to miss about Kerkhoven of yesteryear

To the Editor;

Last week the editor asked if anyone had any memories or things they miss about Kerkhoven and I hope he’s not sorry for asking, so here goes.

I miss summers when all the stores (yes, stores) were open! The streets were bustling with townspeople and farmers alike. Some were shopping, but most were there to visit and to see if their name was drawn for a cash prize. (I think it was \$100.) I miss buying a bag of fresh popped popcorn from Daniel Thorson and taking a drink of water from the porcelain water fountain that was on the sidewalk on Main Street.

I miss watching the Friday night, highly competitive tug of war. I had two favorite teams, The Five Fat Swedes, led by two giant men, Doug Anderson and his cousin Ron, and my other favorite team was a team made up of Haug Implement employees named

The Long Green Line. Oh, I miss when Haug Implement was in town and their annual John Deere Day and eating Jean Haug’s three bean hot-dish!

I miss when there was a softball league in town, but specifically when the games were played in Pillsbury Park. I miss watching the ball leave the bat of Doug Anderson like a rocket launcher and the outfielders were stationed by the bathroom with hopes of making the catch, and Dean Jeseritz batting left and hitting the ball to Hwy 12! I miss the acrobatic catches in the outfield that were made by Jay Tornquist, Mark Weimerskirch and Wes Haglund. I think even Kirby Puckett would’ve been impressed!

I miss the Saturday after Thanksgiving when the High School superintendent E.W. Solyst would gather the elementary students at the playground and he stood on top of the school house with boxes of

Banty roosters, and he would release them from the rooftop and us kids would try to catch a rooster and take it back for a prize. If any moms of us kids are reading this, I can assure you that we stopped and looked both ways before crossing the streets!

I miss seeing Elsie Skoglund’s immaculate ‘56 Chevy and Bud Hixon’s ‘57 Chevy parked on the street by the old school. Oh yes, I miss the old school and watching games from the balcony and when the band room doors were opened for the pep band to play! I miss the Pool Hall and Don Welch’s BBQ sandwiches and playing a game of pool with my friends! I miss partying with friends on elevator hill and I certainly miss the elevator!

I will never miss the drive I have to make now to buy feed for my cattle!

Mike Haglund  
Kerkhoven

## OTHER VOICES

### Our universities cannot forget their antisemitic pasts

by Joseph A. Edelheit  
MinnPost

Minnesota’s universities seem to have forgotten philosopher George Santayana’s maxim: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Twenty-two years ago, St. Cloud State University settled a federal class-action lawsuit (Zmora v. State of Minnesota) that brought national attention to the campus and stained its reputation with antisemitism. SCSU was required to create a new position and hire a professor to develop Jewish studies and a communal awareness program about antisemitism; I was that professor.

Six years later, the Jewish studies program produced the unique community and university collaboration of “To Be Certain of the Dawn,” a Holocaust memorial program of choral and symphonic music that had been commissioned by the Basilica of Saint Mary as a gift to the Jewish community in 2005.

It was performed on both campuses by the SCSU Music Department with Saint John’s University and College of Saint Benedict faculty and students and the St. Cloud Cantabile children’s choir. Then 260 faculty, students and staff from the three universities went to Europe in the summer of 2008 and performed the piece in the Nazi concentration camp Natzweiler-Struthof in France. The SCSU archives has a 17-minute documentary, “Holocaust and Transcendence,” which illuminates what a university can do to repudiate antisemitism.

And the course “Antisemitism in America” was developed and offered by a university challenged to prevent

the past from being repeated. Students taking the course fulfilled a graduation requirement of Liberal Education-Goal 7-Human Diversity. The course explored history, sociology, literature, religious studies and contemporary events to illuminate the “oldest hatred” in Western culture.

Then one year ago, SCSU announced that, due to debt and low enrollment, several programs would be canceled and that some tenured faculty positions would be terminated. Among the programs eliminated was Jewish studies.

State legislators are having public meetings to develop the new State Holocaust Education program, but SCSU — which educates 45% of Minnesota’s teachers — has eliminated Jewish studies. When Minnesota mandates Holocaust education in its public schools, what university will teach “Antisemitism in America” to prepare the teachers?

The University of Minnesota faces an investigation by the U.S. Department of Education of antisemitism on the Twin Cities campus following demonstrations after the Hamas massacre of Oct. 7, 2023, in Israel.

Currently, there are also public hearings about the revocation of the name of the school’s Nicholson Hall. A recent Op-Ed in The Minnesota Daily argues that the name of the building, which houses the university’s Center for Jewish Studies, should be changed as it is named after a man “who aligned himself with notorious antisemites.” It added: “Edward E. Nicholson is a reminder of the University’s darkest chapters.” Ironically, there is currently no course at the Twin Cities campus that

teaches about the antisemitism for which Nicholson’s name might be removed.

Students are missing a vital intellectual challenge in civic responsibility. Three sample questions on antisemitism teach history as well as personal ethics: What is the connection between Henry Ford, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” and antisemitism in the U.S. before World War II? What is the origin of the slang term “to jew someone down” and why is it so offensive? Why were white supremacists in Charlottesville screaming “Jews will not replace us?”

Maybe Santayana’s warning should be amended for our time: Those who cannot teach about our past are condemned to repeat it. A writer proclaimed in 1946 that “Minneapolis is the capitol (sic) of anti-Semitism in the United States” — a phrase that should be part of every Minnesota citizen’s basic literacy about the hatred of Jews.

Minnesota’s two public university systems must create and sustain courses on antisemitism in America. Elie Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz, taught the world during his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, saying, “I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides.”

The urgent need to teach “Antisemitism in America” in Minnesota’s universities requires that we take sides and end the silence about the absence of this course.

Joseph A. Edelheit is an emeritus professor of religious and Jewish studies at St. Cloud State University and was the senior rabbi at Temple Israel from 1992-2001.

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