

Ted Here.....by Ted Almen

Last Saturday, seeing the large room full of people who came together to honor this year's Minnesota Wrestling Coaches 'Hall of Fame' inductees, it was so great to see Brandt Haglund giving the invocation prior to the meal. His father Wes would soon become a legend in the wrestling community when his name was called to receive a key to the Hall.

That's not exactly correct. Wes was already a legend in the sport, long before his nomination and first-round vote to membership. This graduate of Kerkhoven High School, class of 1971, has given more to the local community of wrestling than any other person, bar none. Of all who stood there Saturday night, the man giving the prayer probably knew it better than anyone else... Wes missed much of his own son's time of the mat for the Willmar Cardinals, as head coach of the KMS Saints team.

As Brandt thanked the Good Lord for the sport which had brought so many fellow adherents to Benson on a Saturday evening, beseeching for strength and comfort of those in the "double arm bar of life," I was thinking back to some of Wes' earliest days as a promoter.

The year was around 1981, one of my first at the Banner desk. There had already been a move afoot in the Murdock community for a Jaycees chapter, and being a new group they were looking for some things to shake. One of those -- several years before my return from college -- was the start of a Jaycee kid wrestling program.

At the beginning of kid wrestling here, in the late '70s, Murdock had no mats since prior to consolidation MHS had only basketball for a winter sport. Wes, his brother and others would haul those very heavy rolls of wrestling mats from Kerkhoven to Murdock just so the kids could come out and try the sport, and become Jaycee wrestlers.

Fast forward to the early 1980s... the phone rang on the wall of the old Banner office on 10th Street, and it was

Wes. He religiously reported the results of that weekend's Jaycee wrestling tournament, now as the coach of the combined KMS kids team.

So and so came in first, and these kids placed second... Wes would run through the entire list of youngsters on his team, ending with those who placed fourth. A testament to my own ignorance and/or naivety, I believe my headline over that small sports article declared some amazement at the prowess of this particular group of little wrestlers. I mean, EVERY ONE of them had finished in the top four places of this tournament. I'm sure the type size of the headline rivaled the sinking of the Titanic.

Of course it was only later that I found out there WERE only four places. My initial amazement hit an iceberg, especially since I had steered right into it myself.

It was also later, with a son of my own under Wes' tutelage in little kids wrestling, all the way through high school, that I realized the real value of having a coach like him working with these young people. See, it didn't seem to matter to Wes if one of his kids placed first or fourth. He treated them all with kindness and grace. There was always something good to say about their performance, always something to learn from it, always something to keep a kid wanting to come back and keep trying to do their best. Wes exemplified what a great coach was... not in the number of wins, of which his teams and wrestlers accumulated many... but in that quality beyond that which makes a lasting bond of admiration and friendship. Wes is the kind of person who you just want to put your arm on his shoulder and catch up.

There is a lot of good that comes from high school athletics, and some not so good. Having a coach that you still honor and respect many years after your playing days are done falls into the first category. In my mind Wes is in that place for most of his former wrestlers. In my book he's a true Hall of Famer.



Confessions of an ink-stained wretch...
Painful history can be and is often repeated

by Lee Egerstrom

A writing collaborator from Finland and I just had a fun and at times painful exchange of correspondence dealing with how Fascism comes far too close to home for both of us. This will also be a brief history lesson that we Minnesotans often choose to ignore, but shouldn't.

Over in Finland, economist Samuli Skurnik and his medical researcher brother Michael have written a paper about their father, Leo Skurnik. He was a Finnish hero in World War II and had a distinguished medical career after the war.

What the elder Skurnik didn't have was an advanced medical research career because his upward path was blocked because Skurnik was born a Jew. The research paper, to be published in a journal this fall, is called "They absolutely don't want you to progress here" - The academic careers of Jewish students were interrupted in Finland by the antisemitism of the 1930s.

The rising Fascism coming out of Germany in the early 1930s found followers and sympathizers everywhere, including in Minnesota. It can to some extent be explained and understood in Finland. Like much of Northern and Central Europe, it was in the crosshairs of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

How this comes back to Banner readers is complicated. Samuli Skurnik and I collaborated some years back on a research paper for the Geneva-based International Cooperative Alliance entitled 'The Evolving Finnish Economic Model: How Cooperatives Serve as 'Globalization Insurance.' It was similar to books I had written about New Generation Cooperatives taking shape in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest.

What Skurnik didn't know was that I just read Prequel: An American Fight Against Fascism, written by MSNBC anchor Rachel Maddow. Yes, Maddow is an opinionated celebrity host on an opinionated news channel. But she is also a tremendous academic researcher when she wants to be - with undergraduate degree from Stanford University and

a doctorate in political science from Oxford University.

This book is a buildout from podcasts she did on extremists. Guess what. We Minnesotans have had our share.

Maddow looked back at World War I and the isolationism that carried through the 1930s before partly going into hiding after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941. Populist elements in American politics have always been present, and as observers of today's bizarre political factions are starting to see, the populist movements overtime engage the political left and right.

That brings up a name most Minnesotans probably want to forget and how the people of Ortonville had had enough - one of the most unusual political events in our state history. Ernest Lundeen, originally a Republican with isolationist views, was elected to Congress from western Minnesota. He turned out to be an ally of German propagandists and was one of Germany's biggest backers in opposing American entrance into World War I.

In a speech scheduled for delivery at Ortonville, Maddow's book tells how local folks had heard enough. They removed him from the speech stage, marched him to the railway, and locked him in a refrigerated car on a departing train.

This was, Maddow notes, an actual case of being ridden out of town on the rails.

But Lundeen wasn't through. He came back and got to the House again in 1933 with the new Farmer Labor Party of Minnesota, and then onto the Senate in 1937. He remained an isolationist soft on Hitler and the Nazi's in those public positions.

What must have caused a lot of conspiracy theories at the time, he died in an airplane crash in Virginia while returning to give a speech in Minnesota on August 31, 1940. He was under a federal investigation at the time for being a paid agent of a German propaganda group.

Minneapolis Mayor Hubert Humphrey and others, including Appleton banker Elmer A. Benson who would also serve in the U.S. Senate and as governor of Minnesota, welded the national Democratic Party with the Farmer-Laborites in 1944 to form today's DFL



Party. The Farmer-Laborites were an outgrowth of North Dakota's Non-Partisan League enjoyed with a Duluth labor party.

Extremists, then and now, could be found in all three major parties at that time and in the schisms alive in remaining Minnesota parties today.

Some of this is painful to me as a history buff who knows the damage extremists like Fascists can and do to people. Other aspects of prairie uprisings and populism can be entertaining, and fun, when put in perspective of their times.

I discovered some research that I found fun when I finished a centennial history book for the National Farmers Union in 2002, a project started by two other journalists Milt Hakel and Bob Denman.

Records kept at the University of Colorado show the usually center-left NFU was actually started by Republican farmers in Texas and Georgia. That made sense. The old South states were solidly Democrats left over from the Civil War. Mavericks bucking the power trusts in those states were Republicans.

The first non-active farmer joining the Farmers Union was President Teddy Roosevelt. Farmers Union linked more closely with Democrats later when the organization expanded northwards into historic Republican states.

A later U.S. president, Democrat Woodrow Wilson, and his extremely conservative secretary of Agriculture were not impressed. Documents in the Farmers Union archives suggest both played peripheral roles in creating the center-right American Farm Bureau Federation in 1919.

That may make you smile if you are close to agriculture and the farm groups. But what isn't fun is that our politics don't always change over time. Fascism, here and abroad, is still embedded in our politics.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

One thing to agree on, appreciation of rescue squad

To the Editor;

In this day when there are lots of things we disagree on, there is one thing we can all agree on and that is how fortunate small towns are to have dedicated, special people that make up our rescue squads. These are special people that sacrifice much to help those

in need. This was never more brought home than Wednesday night when my wife, Carolyn, had a diabetic attack. At least eight people showed up to take care of the situation and they handled it perfectly. Maggie (I don't know her last name, sorry.) stopped and told me what the trouble was and she was exactly right.

These are special, dedicated people who deserve heartfelt thanks and support.

God bless everyone of you,
Carolyn and Doug Anderson
Kerkhoven

Church memories from Kerkhoven

To the Editor;

Church:
The city name of Kerkhoven is Dutch meaning church cemetery. It is from the persons who purchased bonds (Kerkhoven and Co. of Holland in 1864) of the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (later the Great Northern etc.). The family name originally was van Kerckhoven (Kerk=church and hoven=garden or yard). I remember Dr. Kerkhoven coming to town from the East Coast to visit with my dad. I don't remember that the city was named after him or his family but I'm assuming so?
Kerkhoven was blessed to have four churches in town which is pretty special for a town of around 650 residents (not to mention all of the churches in Murdock, Sunburg and Pennock. From east to west there was the Free Church located across from the park. Further down the block was the Presbyterian Church. A few more blocks down and to the right was the Baptist Church, and finally at the west end of town was Kerkhoven Lutheran, my family's home church.
My remembrances of Kerkhoven Lutheran are church bells ringing on Sunday mornings. There was a

rope as I recall at the back of the sanctuary that someone was put in charge of pulling to make the bells ring on Sunday mornings. Walking up the stairs to the sanctuary to worship on the right was a nursery where parents could take their children if they were crying during the service. To the left of that were the stairs that go up to the balcony. Enjoying the beautiful stained glass windows that surrounded the sanctuary. There must be a story behind those windows and I would love to hear it if somebody knows the background. The pulpit straight ahead to the right, the altar where we knelt and took communion, the choir loft to the left. Doris Bakken religiously playing the organ every Sunday.
Going down the stairs from the sanctuary were the Sunday School classrooms. I remember a big room towards the back of the lower level where Carol Amundson taught us songs to sing at Sunday services. Sunday School programs around Christmas time where we would each get an apple when exiting the sanctuary following the program. Going to the 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service where at the end of the service the lights were turned down and we were all given candles to light with

each other and then sang Silent Night in the dark with our candles burning. That was magical. Then home we went to open presents by the fire and my brother hand churned homemade ice cream for all of us and we stayed up until the wee hours of the morning.
My mom's Swedish tearing on Christmas Day and a big Christmas meal later in the day. I remember confirmation class, Luther League spaghetti dinners that we put on and the Scandinavian dinners that we hosted with a variety of Norwegian and Swedish foods. The fellowship hall where those dinners were put on and where the church ladies would serve coffee and treats.

At the back of the fellowship hall was a library that had doors that opened up to the fellowship hall. There was a Sunday school room to the left of the library where I think Carlton Nelson taught Sunday School classes. After that there was an exit door that went out to the back where some people parked during church service or events. I'm sure I'm forgetting many things but these are what I remember.

Ellen Almen-Dale
Plymouth, MN

OTHER VOICES

If pride and honor mattered...

by David Schultz
MinnPost

If pride in honor mattered, Donald Trump would not be a candidate for president of the United States. In Minnesota, Sen. Nicole Mitchell would resign from office. If pride and honor mattered, both of the supporters of Trump and Mitchell would demand the same of both of them.

Character matters, or at least it should. We should expect at least the same standard of conduct among public officials as we would expect among the rest of us. But we should expect more. There is, or should be, a higher standard of conduct that we should expect of them than simply saying they have not been convicted of a crime.
For more than 25 years, I have taught ethics and done

ethics training for a variety of professions. They range from government officials, lawyers, accountants, fraud investigators and people in Fortune 500 corporations. One of the things we all agree on is that merely following the bare minimum of the codes of conduct for those professions does not make one ethical or a leader. Those who are the bottom feeders, who merely aspire not to be disbarred or have their professional licenses taken away. That is not enough to be considered ethical.

It is also about pride and honor.

According to Merriam Webster, pride is about self-respect and dignity. For Merriam Webster, honor is about a good name. It is about public esteem, reputation, merit and privilege to serve in office. To serve in a professional capac-

ity is about pride and honor.

And the question is, where is that pride and honor for Donald Trump, Nicole Mitchell, and their supporters? Trump faces four criminal trials and 86 charges. Yes, his supporters may argue that some of this is political retribution or that he has not been convicted of any crime. Yet, look at the New York trial where one sees a pattern of behavior no one would find acceptable, evidenced by, according to testimony, he worked with the editor of the National Enquirer to suppress stories that both of them knew were less than flattering. Trump has already been found liable for defamation and for business fraud. He has already settled disputes with other government entities regarding shady business dealings surrounding Trump Uni-

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