

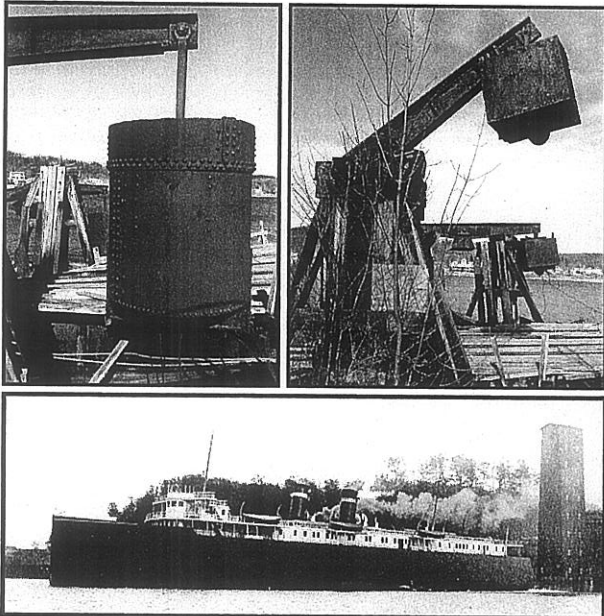
# ★ THE ELBERTA ALERT ★

\*free!

vol. 101 no. 1

A Community News Organ

Wed., Feb. 29, 2012



FAR LEFT: One of the West Slip counterweights, made from an old ship's boiler cut in two. LEFT: The East Slip weights were made from fireboxes, according to Ken Holmes. BOTTOM: The *Manistique & Northern* no. 1 (later the *Milwaukee*, lost with all hands) seen tied up at the West Slip. Visible is the grain elevator, at the time the tallest building in the county. PHOTOS: (TOP) JENNIFER WILKINS; COURTESY JED JAWORSKI

## Historic Car Ferry Aprons to Be Dismantled

THEY WERE THE VERY FIRST of their kind, and they're among the very last. But like others before them, the historic car ferry loading aprons of Elberta's deepwater port are collapsing. Over a hundred years of wind, water, and ice and decades of neglect have undermined them; cables have frayed and snapped, paint has faded, and cedar seedlings rise amid their creosote-soaked white oak buttresses.

This fall the developer Scott Gest, whose Elberta Landholding Company owns the property on which the aprons rest, announced he had received grant money to undertake their demolition. At a recent council meeting he said the work would begin in the spring. Indeed, bids are due March 8, and April may see the first wrecking day. So a group of residents of Elberta and "north Elberta" have come together to work with him to see what can be salvaged of these relics for display and maritime edification.

The West Slip site has the longest pedigree—it serviced every single car ferry, from the *Ann Arbor no. 1* to the *Viking*. After 16 years of operation, the original (1892) apron was shot, and in 1908, the loading apron at Northport was purchased by the Ann Arbor Railroad, and rebuilt there. It

would also be the last apron used to load a Great Lakes railroad car ferry, when box-cars were put aboard the National Historic Landmark ferry S.S. *City of Milwaukee* as it was relocated from Elberta a decade ago.

In echt Elbertian fashion, the ferry aprons were cobbled together from spare parts, including anchors, pieces of scrap rail, old boilers and fireboxes, and who knows what else? That remains to be discovered as they are taken apart. Information on the East Slip as well as additional information on the West Slip is still being gathered. The Ferry Apron Savers are in touch with the Ann Arbor Railroad Technical and Historical Association and other groups to learn what to look for. Scott Gest himself has made an intensive study of the history of the slips and is eager to cooperate if there's community will to do some more cobbling—this time to preserve and remember our local history in a fun and attractive way. If you would like to get involved in the project or share your ideas, please contact Emily Votruba at 231-399-0098 or go to the "Save (at Least Some of) the Elberta Car Ferry Aprons" page at facebook.com/ElbertaCarFerryAprons. At press time the page already had 59 friends.

—Emily Votruba, Jed Jaworski

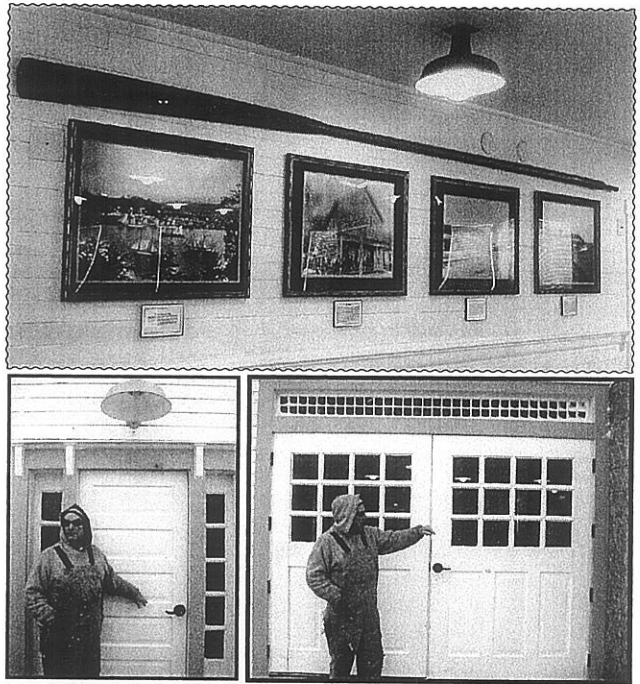
## VILLAGERS GIVE FIRST AID TO LIFESAVING STATION

THE LIFESAVING STATION remains one of the Village's largest and fastest-growing sources of revenue, generating in the neighborhood of \$50,000 per season in rentals, mostly for weddings. In this year's budget, according to Laura Manville, a line item designates 22 percent of last year's actual income for repairs and maintenance. "It's the jewel of our village," said Reg Manville at the February council meeting, "and the money needs to always be there to make sure [it's] properly kept up."

And it certainly helps that Elberta happens to have an extremely talented carpenter like Ross Thorsen on hand and eager to lend his skills and ingenuity to solve the problems posed by this old and weather-plagued building, whose historic status makes it as much a headshaker as a moneymaker. Hired to install new custom-built back doors (made by R&J Raven of Grand Rapids), Ross went beyond the call of duty and repaired the rest of the doors, which many feared would also have to be replaced eventually.

"Mark Held helped a lot on this," Thorsen said. "He repairs boats. He showed me how to use epoxy to seal the cracks in the other doors. The were so bad they had fungus growing in them. We rehabbed all of them and they're like new." Held ended up donating several containers of epoxy to the project along with his time.

Thorsen also put drip caps over each door to forestall further rot due to water leaks, added weather stripping, and installed new door handles and locks on each one. Floor bolts were added to the big back doors so that they could be kept from blowing open in the wind, and slow closures were mounted on the smaller doors to keep them from banging open and shut and getting damaged, and to enable guests to prop them open without scrounging around for chairs or trash cans to do so. The project was finally finished on February 26 (it began in September) after a



TOP: Our fledgling museum at the Lifesaving Station, with frames made and installed by Ross Thorsen. ABOVE LEFT: Ross points out the newly sealed doors and new locks. ABOVE RIGHT: The door is the drip cap he created to prevent further water damage. RIGHT: The custom-built back doors. Note temporary shelter for installation of lefthand set of doors. PHOTOS: TOP, JENNIFER WILKINS; BOTTOM (2) EMILY VOTRUBA

lot of foul-weather labor that required Ross to build auxiliary plywood structures for shelter as the work proceeded.

Ross has such an eye for detail that his job naturally got bigger. He purchased a set of tools at his own expense so he could custom build storm windows for the whole building to protect the windows from the weather. And his attention turned to the building's

continues on page 4

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# Attacking the Fringes

By Emily Votruba

NO AGENDA CONFLICTS were mentioned ahead of the budget hearing. During public comment, Emily Votruba mentioned the car ferry apron saving initiative (see article on page 1).

County Commissioner Marcia Stobie said county treasurer Linda Wilson will retire June 1. A special Earth Day electronics collection will be held at one of the Benzie elementary schools. Commissioners interviewed three people for a vacancy on the DHS board. A public hearing on a proposed ORV ordinance is set for March 20. Speaking as a member of the planning commission, Stobie said the PC had been approached to join a program with other townships through the Alliance for Economic Success, which has a \$160K grant to do joint master planning. Stobie attended a presentation by Ingemar Johansson on the Honor Area Restoration Project in which he sang the praises of the AES program. Since Elberta has just approved its own master plan and is happy with NWMCoG's help, Stobie said if there's a need down the road we might "plug in" but that she wasn't interested in starting over on the master plan

process.

The January bills were approved: Receipts, \$21,857.28. Expenses: Accounts payable, \$17,722.20. Payroll, \$8,371.27. Parks and Rec, \$73.50. Solstice, \$73.50. Total expenses: \$26,240.47.

Ken Bonney said Scott Gest has given a 30 x 50 foot former Koch Fuel building to the Village. Our zoning allows us to install it behind the Village Office, where it would dramatically increase our shopwork and vehicle storage space. We have two months to tear it down and haul it out, which he will do. He referred to water system maintenance for which it may be necessary to hire an engineer.

Ken Holmes said BLUA's insurance has been cut a bit; and they are examining a grant plan involving other townships. The BLUA employee seems not to want to upgrade his qualifications, so they are still looking for a backup engineer.

Reg opened the advertised public hearing on the Village Budget for 2012/13. Ken Holmes said the only negative thing he'd seen in an audit in the past three years was the negative on Parks and Rec. He said he was disappointed with all the calls for cuts. He said the deficit started over 15 years ago. He said the deficit elimination plan [meaning the emergency manager law] already had over 250,000 signatures on it to get rid of it. He said there's enough dissatisfaction with the way our state government has been operating. "The two or three places they've

gotten into are probably all right [to have taken over]. Until they take over Detroit, I don't think we have to worry about anything." He said he thought the emergency manager law would be on the ballot for rejection in November and he didn't want to hear much more about emergency managers until then.

Reg said the Budget Committee spent two meetings going line by line through the budget, and asked if council had read it. Linda Manville, a member of the committee, said she was glad it included first responders, which she feels is very important for our residents "after we watched what happened to Fuzz Brown." Otherwise, she said, "The budget presented today is balanced; we're still in a deficit situation, but the budget is balanced with revenues to expenditures."

Diane Jenks said the budget is hard for laymen to understand and that it takes someone on the Budget Committee or the treasurer to explain it. [The budget was made available to the council members after the second budget meeting, which was held at 5 pm on Thursday, February 9, a week before this council meeting; at the committee meeting, a letter from Diane, in which she outlined some of her suggestions, was discussed in a very heated manner. Diane was not present at that meeting.] Diane said she'd like to see 20% employee contributions toward health care begin immediately, saying "everybody else in the country is taking a hit on contributions to health care—or they don't even have insurance." Linda said she supported Diane's 20% suggestion, saying that though nothing needed to be done until the fall, she wanted to see that option left open to be discussed at that time.

Ross Thorsen said he didn't agree with cutting benefits and said we weren't going to find anybody better than [Village DPW] Ken Bonney. "He's pro-

active, he's been saving the village money." He asked why Linda felt the urgency to make the employees pay 20%. "It's not me, it's the state," Linda said. Diane said, "This budget needs to represent what's best for everybody in the village, not just three people."

Laura Manville said that in 2009, '10, and '11 when the employees took it upon themselves to make cuts, they saved the Village \$25,000 by giving up benefits, going from a \$500 deductible to a \$2,500 deductible, a lower prescription benefit (they now pay \$80, up from \$40, toward prescriptions) and they have increased their copay.

Diane said, "You haven't had to pay anything out of your pocket for premiums."

Laura said they did have to pay more out of pocket for the deductible and prescriptions and that caused the policy premium to go down tremendously, to the tune of that \$25,000 savings. Laura said the employees were already under the new state mandated hard cap, and Sharyn has volunteered to go off the insurance and save the village an additional \$5,000, going from an over \$500 monthly premium to a \$100 reimbursement, putting Ken and Laura way under the cap. "We're not even near it."

Reg said, "Our employees have already sacrificed, and there are some people on this council who want them to sacrifice more."

Marcia Stobie pointed out that the relevant state law says we either have to be under a hard cap or the employees have to pay 20%. "I don't think they expect you to do both." She asked if the Headlee millage rollback affected village revenue; some commissioners would like to increase the tax levy. "We tried that," said Laura, referring to the failed ballot proposal at the November 2010 election to override the Headlee Rollback. Marcia said, "I know, but it's a new day, it's another time. I just wanted to know if that would help you out." Laura said, "The equivalent factor has not changed in several years, it's stuck at 1, so we have not gone down in several years, but our SEV has gone down, so we're getting less money in taxes, but not because of Headlee."

During the public hearing on the budget Emily Votruba voiced her support for no further cuts to health benefits, saying that it's important to preserve the value of these jobs, since people go into public work for the security it offers; she would rather see hours cut than benefits. Ross said we should be creative and positive and focus on increasing revenue. Art Melendez said "Ditto." Ken Holmes said it looked like harassment to him. "It's this picking and pointing fingers, like this letter we got from the Putney brothers here." Reg mentioned moneysaving ideas including a different garbage collection option and quarterly billing for water.

Reg asked that the following statement be reproduced in full in this newspaper: "When I ran for office I promised the village I would clean up the mess we had with our village employees. Our productivity was down; we had low staff morale and esteem. we had five new employees in the garage in a very short period of time. One left because of failure to meet job requirements. That employee also lacked direction from our past administration. Three left because of working conditions I describe as micro-management. They did not quit because of their workload, fringe benefits, or pay. Our current employee is very productive even though his workload has increased, and he's doing the work of his predecessors while having reduced fringe benefits. When I took office I met with the clerk and treasurer and stressed that productivity had to increase. I stressed that they were to stay in bounds with regard to their job description and not try to manage the garage. This was a problem in the past because of lack of leadership. The clerk and treasurer have been elected to their positions four times. They have served 16 years each. It doesn't really matter if you didn't vote for these people or dislike them



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## Remember When ... With Ken

★ Portrait by Art Melendez

A magical mystery tour? Here we see the Elberta Band, standing at the front door of the old Elberta school in 1933. Help! Tell the postman to wait a minute, and write a little letter to us with the names you know. PS: We love you!



TOP ROW, FROM LEFT

1. Mr. Bearse [?]
2. [mystery]
3. George Edwards
4. Art Little
5. [mystery]
6. Wayne Fitzhugh
7. Bob Wheeler

SECOND ROW

8. Fred McPherson
9. Royce McConnell
10. Bill Little
11. John Goethals
12. [mystery]
13. Lawrence Baughman
14. Lyle Fitzhugh
15. Frances Matheson

BOTTOM ROW

16. Will Lockhart
17. Catherine Stall
18. Fred Lockhart
19. [mystery]
20. Edward Goethals
21. Donna Welker
22. Louise Blacklock
23. Carroll Edwards
24. Bill Dupie [?]

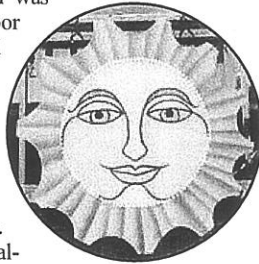
PHOTO AND NAMES  
COURTESY OF JEANNE EDWARDS

# First Solstice Fund-raiser Was Hot Hot Hot

By Emily Votruba

UNDER NEW PRESSURE to make the Solstice Festival profitable, the Solstice Committee pulled off a fantastic fund-raiser on fairly short notice, raising \$962 with a chili cookoff at the Cabbage Shed. Thirteen chili submissions, four live bands, and great prizes made for a fun—and, with a \$5 suggested donation at the door for the bands and \$5 for unlimited chili “voting”—a superaffordable Saturday night. The team went in with high spirits and low expectations, and came out pleasantly surprised with the turnout and revenue. Among the expenses Solstice hopes to cover are fireworks, which cost about \$3,200; Josh Herren, who did much of the organizing, said

he hoped to preserve Solstice’s traditionally free admission. As a bonus, Laura Manville, another organizer, ended up winning the People’s Choice (most votes) award, the top prize, which was a stay at Harbor Lights donated by Steve Tebo. Laura generously forwent her prize so it could be “used again” in another fund-raiser. The traditional-chili top honors went to Steve Tebo, who commented on the Solstice Facebook page: “Y’all must have tasted the Benzie love in the Border Chili... beef and ground pork from May Farm, vegetables from Loving Dove Farms and Belgian porter brewed by Elberta’s own Brian Confer.” The veggie chili winner was Charlie’s Natural Food Market, with their Sweet Potato Chipotle recipe. Butch Adkins’s White Chili won in the Eclectic category; his crockpot was practically licked clean within an hour, prompting Laura to opine



that they’d have to make sure to have another white chili next time. The other delish entrants in this close contest included Ken Bonney, Jenn Ryan, Conundrum Café (with 3 entries—and a logging-camp’s worth of excellent corn bread), Doug McPherson, Christine Walkons, Coho Café, and Greta Zwink.

At 6 pm the live music began, and the Naughty Neighbors, Blake Elliot and the Robinson Affair, Platte Plains Wolf Pack, and Jimmy Olson played long into the night.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In other Parks and Rec news, president Art Melendez has resigned from the Parks and Rec and Solstice committees. He will continue to help out “behind the scenes.” He accomplished a lot during his short tenure, overseeing the successful Christmas tree sale and the initial reorganization of Solstice. With the help of Ken Holmes, Park and Rec also secured a donation of \$700 for park



ABOVE: Bill Soper votes for his fave chili in the Shed backroom. RIGHT: Prizes donated by Art Melendez, the Conundrum Café, Steve Tebo, and others. PHOTOS: EMILY VOTRUBA



playscaping and materials for maintaining the Lifesaving Station from the Gleaners. Thanks for your work, Art!



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**MARCH**  
Ad for the Glarum Store: “Shop with confidence in the surety that the prices are Right and that you will be pleased with every purchase made here... Visit throughout the store as you Like. The merchandise is marked in plain figures. Purchase or not according to the Dictates of your own judgment.” Their Special of the Week: Brooms, 25 cents.—*The South Frankfort Alert*, March 16, 1911

Date	Event	Details	Location	Time
1	BENZIE AUDUBON CLUB MEETING	“Grassland Birds.” Free and open to the public. Families are welcome.	Tribal Outpost, 7282 Hoadley Rd., Benzonia	7 pm
1, 8, 15	BENZONIA ACADEMY LECTURE SERIES	“Medieval to Modern: The Evolution of the Hapsburg Empire” by Dr. Louis Yock. You are so there!	BAHS Museum; 6941 Traverse Ave., Benzonia	4 pm
2	CABBAGE SHED SOCK HOP	Music from the ‘50s and ‘60s. Come early, get some grub, and cut a rug!	198 Frankfort Ave. 231-352-9843	6 pm–9 pm
3, 10, 17, 24, 31	INDOOR FARMERS’ MARKET	Farmers and other vendors extend the growing season in the Betsie Bay Inn back room.	231 Main Street, Frankfort	9 am–1 pm (Saturdays)
3	BOB BINT BENEFIT	An old-fashioned euchre tournament (\$20 per team; winners split purse with Big Bob); food and drink specials; raffle; live music begins at 7 with Irv Landis, Jake Fry singer, and Platte Plains Wolf Pack. Josh Stoltz is throwing this event for Bint, who was seriously injured in a hit-and-run accident in October.	Fallen Timbers, 13901 Honor Hwy (US-31)	4 pm–2 am; \$10 donation at door
6	PARK AND REC MEETING	Regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission	Village Community Bld., 401 First St.	7 pm (first Tuesdays)
6	ELBERTA PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION	Regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	7 pm (first Tuesdays)
8	ART FOR WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH AT OLIVER ART CENTER AND THE GARDEN THEATER	It’s International Women’s Day/Month! Opening reception for “Art by Women” at the Oliver Art Center (exhibition from March 8–31; hours: M–F 10–4, Sat. 1–4); followed by the Benzie Area Women’s History Project presentation of <i>The Harvest</i> , a documentary on child agricultural workers (admission by donation to BAWHP).	132 Coast Guard Road, Frankfort, and the Garden Theater	5 pm–7 pm (opening); 7:15 pm (film)
11	ELBERTA ALERT EDITORIAL MEETING	Come to the Library and hand in a story, submit a correction, make a suggestion, scoop the competition, or just shoot the shinola.	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	1–2 pm (second Sundays)
12	DUNE PARK COMMITTEE MEETING	Elberta Dunes Natural Area Management Committee Meeting. Have your say on how we’ll use our new land.	Elbert Library 704 Frankfort Ave.	12 noon (second Mondays)
13	GILMORE TOWNSHIP MEETING	Regular Meeting of the Board of Gilmore Township.	Elberta Library, 704 Frankfort Ave.	7 pm (second Tuesdays)
15	VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING	Regular Meeting of Village Board of Trustees. Agenda available at Village Office.	Village Community Bld. 401 First St.	7 pm (third Thursdays)
17	BENZIE COUNTY RECYCLING SPECIAL COLLECTION	Styrofoam packaging & household batteries. No appointment necessary. Styrofoam must be clean and bagged, boxed, or bundled. No packing peanuts or insulation accepted. Batteries over 1.5 volts must have terminals taped.	BenCo Gov’t Center, 448 Court Pl. lower level parking lot/ Maintenance Garage	9 am–12 noon; 882-0554; benzieco.net
17	COMMUNITY DINNER AT ELBERTA’S BEST CHURCH	Free dinner and fellowship at Elberta United Methodist Church	555 Lincoln Ave.	4 pm–6 pm (third Saturdays)
17	FAUXGRASS QUARTET AT THE CABBAGE SHED	St. Patrick’s Day, the Faux and their friends, Tim McKay on bass fiddle. O’nuff said. Free downloads at fauxgrassmusic.com	198 Frankfort Ave. 231-352-9843	9 pm; free
22	PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING	Open meeting with Sheriff Rory Heckmann to discuss county security issues.	BenCo Sheriff’s Office 505 S. Michigan Ave., Beulah	6 pm (fourth Thursdays)



the Benzie County Water Festival (April 14), the *Alert* and the Benzie Community Water Council are investigating Frankfort-Elberta water use. Pick one summer month and one winter month and compare how much you're using (and how much you're spending!). Post your data anonymously at <http://bit.ly/ySB8qp>. Call the Frankfort office at 231-352-7117 or the Elberta office at 231-352-7201 for info on your use if you can't find your bills.

\*\*\*  
**Crime, Elberta-style** A break-in did not occur at the Cagney residence on Frankfort Avenue at the beginning of February. **Troy Lamerson** and **Sheriff Rory Heckman**, in separate phone calls to the office, could find no record of it in their database. Mary Cagney, reached by phone, said it was news to her, and that the Cagneys themselves had removed their flatscreen TV from the premises. "We've been in Elberta 15 years and never once had a problem. I have to give [the Village] some real kudos. A friend of ours in Texas can't even leave a planter out. People just drive up in a truck and load up planters, patio furniture, whatever's not screwed down." Well, the *Alert* opined, in apology for the unnecessary call, guess you know people are watching. "And I'm glad they do!" she said.

\*\*\*  
**S'ghetti Dinner benefit for Betsie Bay Cooperative Preschool** .On February 17 the *Alert* showed up at the high school for, you guessed it, the \$5 spaghetti, and ended up eating homemade cookies instead while chatting with Becky Noffsinger, one of the preschool parent-volunteers. That night the Panthers were playing Leland, so there was a sizable crowd milling about looking at the silent auction items. The preschool operates on a budget of \$7,000 to \$10,000 per year, which comes from fund-raisers such as this one and tuition of \$85 per month (school is held three days a week). The tuition pays for the teaching and the fundraiser for everything else, with parents supplying all nonteaching labor. Lately the school has gotten a generous break from the Methodist Church, which has waived their rent.

Coach Stapleton scooted by with a dustpan and broom (what can't he do?) and Josh Stoltz appeared sans mustache and headed for the auction table, vowing to look only at things he "would buy anyway." Cookies were 20 cents each and cookbooks were \$5. As the national anthem rang through the cinderblock walls and open court doors, it seemed there

was a lot of spaghetti left. Becky and the *Alert* discussed the lack of fortitude of the Greek women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. When the cashbox was counted, it rang in within goal range, at \$2,100.

\*\*\*  
**Other Elberta mischief...** **Crystal Cicansky Smeltzer** has made the kidney and pancreas donation lists, and her spirits were high on a recent Saturday at the Corner Drug. Talk naturally turned to Petye the Peacock, her erstwhile feathered ward. (Petye now seems to reside on Johnson Rd.) We learned that Petye is actually the son of two other peafowl Crystal owned. In the meantime, the Village may have a new charismatic megafauna—one or more bears. Crystal says she hasn't seen them, but she's seen their

More than 40 people attended the **Lucky 7 Open House** at Shear Class & Affordable Art on Tuesday February 7. Everyone rolled the dice or drew a card hoping to get a 7. Thirty-seven lucky winners chose between a paraffin dip with Christa Lundeen, a 7-minute chair massage with Sue Oseland or a gift bag from Greg and Jinx. A night of fun and excitement and a chance to mingle with three celebrity artists, Peter DeVoe, and Judy and Dave Grant. The lucky 7 winners of the end of the evening drawings were: Marilyn Nothnagel (a pedicure with Christa), Tina Noffsinger (a massage with Sue), Sue Bishop (art from Greg), and Emily Luxford, Dave Grant, Andrea Perry, and Connie Manke won facials with Jinx. Thank you all for coming—we appreciate your support through the long winter as well as summer.

\*\*\*  
**Grace Banktson**, who also attended Lucky 7 night, lives in the house her dad built at the north end of her uncle Gus's property along M-22. *Alert* readers may recall Gus Banktson making an appearance in last month's issue, in a somewhat prurient item from our former incarnation. "Gus was the first one here from Sweden," Grace said. "Bengtsson was how it was spelled. My uncle Gus later had a little farm on Bellows. He was always so dapper. I've seen old pictures of him and his brothers—they were quite handsome, you know. He would have been in his early 20s at the time he appeared in the original *Alert*. She went on to say she and her family briefly rented

*Sunrise . . .*

We congratulate Scott and Staci Kidder on the birth of their precious daughter Mackenna Karon Kidder (6 lbs, 2 oz.), on January 11, 2012, at Munson Medical Center. Welcome to Elberta, Mackenna!





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Downtown Frankfort

share of talented foragers among us. Find Tim's page at Great Lakes Wild Foragers. Be forewarned: commercial exploiters will be ushered out of the group.

\*\*\*  
 We welcome the **Run Across Palestine** team, back from their 129-mile (on foot) journey to raise money and awareness for sustainable olive growers. They all returned safely despite tense encounters with the Israeli military.

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**Stick a daisy in it.** Speaking of bearing arms ... it's illegal to discharge firearms in the Village. And discharging pellet guns at pets is just wrong.

\*\*\*  
**HAVE A NEWS ITEM YOU WANT BLASTED?** Call or text 231-399-0098, send to Elberta Alert Foghorn, PO Box 357, Elberta, MI 49628, or write to [elberta.alert@gmail.com](mailto:elberta.alert@gmail.com), attn "Foghorn."

**LIFESAVING STATION, cont'd**

primary users. "What's the first thing these brides do when they get here? These girls are getting married and they're in a panic, and what are they doing? They're stringing lights! So we'll save them the hassle." With the ulterior motive of preventing more tack holes and peeling paint in the beams, Ross installed nearly invisible hooks all over the main room, and is now asking for donations of white fairy lights. "Why not just leave the lights up? I'm into that! I love that stuff!"

Ross and Ken Holmes also decided that it would help renters appreciate the use of the building if its fascinating history was more in evidence. They found oars from lifeboats, labeled them according to the car ferry they belonged to, and mounted them on the walls. They gathered up some pictures that were sitting in storage upstairs and arranged them downstairs. Ross made the frames himself, and they're installed securely, screwed into the walls. Now they're asking for your help. Do you have any photos or other memorabilia to contribute to our growing museum? Please contact Ken Holmes at 231-352-9291 or the *Alert*, and we'll help get them into Ross's very capable hands. We'll create a digital file of any photos and deliver it to you along with a high-quality reproduction as our thanks when we return your originals.—*Emily Votruba*

digestive evidence. Needless to say, this publication would love to have their photographic evidence!

\*\*\*  
**More Ken Bonney love** If like the Elberta bear you haven't been in constant hibernation during this strange winter, you may have noticed what an A++ job our DPW is doing with the plowing and salt-sanding. Thank you, Ken.

\*\*\*  
**On the Web to find the rhizome** Benzonia-based cobbler and wildcrafter Tim McKay (see the March 17 calendar entry for another of his lines of work) has started a network for finding freelance edibles. He writes: "I've created this page as a resource for folks in our region to share tips and information about how to find, identify, harvest, and prepare the bounty of wild foods available to us. Did you drive by a chaga patch on US-131 at 70 mph? Have a great recipe for garlic mustard? Wanna share your rice-harvesting tips? This is the place! Please invite your friends only if they get the idea that this is an open forum to help us all take care of each other and the world around us...Please share your wisdom with us in the knowledge that we will not be greedy, wasteful, or destructive in our gathering practices." Villagers have more than our

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an apartment above Shear Class when it was Thomas's store. We're hoping Grace might dig up a dashing photo of Gus from back in his "courting" days.

\*\*\*  
**Old News, redux** The Benzie Shores District Library has posted 46 old *Elberta Alerts* online for your reading pleasure, at <http://benziehores.sdlhost.com>. Transport yourself back to a time when the *Alert* was 8 (much larger) pages and covered Arcadia!

\*\*\*  
 Take the **Water Use Survey!** Ahead of



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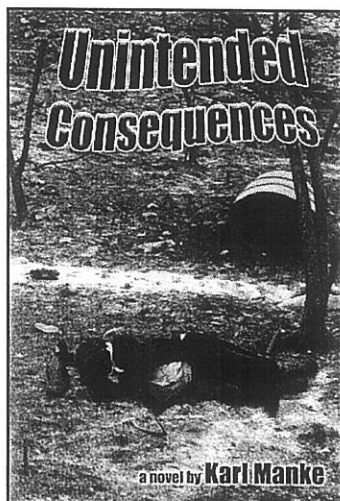
# Unintended Consequences

A BOOK BY KARL MANKE  
(ALEXANDER BOOKS, JANUARY 2012)

THE AUTHOR OF THIS murder mystery was born in Frankfort, delivered by Dr. Trautman in September 1942, and lived the first nine years of his life in Elberta. A graduate of Michigan State University, he is a successful self-employed entrepreneur who has lived most of his life in Owosso, since his family moved there in 1951. His mother, Aristine Manke, retired to the Village and still lives here.

Karl has discovered that an inclination for telling a good story is in his genes. This is his first novel. It takes place in a small mid-Michigan town, probably

much like Owosso, with similarities to life and people in Elberta also evident in his writing. His character studies are well-drawn and his characters encompass many of the types one might expect to find in Anytown, USA—law-abiding citizens, upstanding law-enforcement officers, goody clergymen, competent lawyers, empathetic funeral directors, avaricious types, egotists, down-and-out recovering alcoholics, re-



ligious fanatics, Right-to-Lifers, false (and real) philanthropists, do-gooders, Good Time Charlies, ladies' men, snobs, long-suffering wives, perennial-student mama's boys, and even a murderer.

Many of these characters meet regularly at a locally popular restaurant, where they sit at a large round table to discuss politics, religion, and the events of the day. One person who does not appear at these confabs is a man who is a passionate anti-abortionist. Some people agree with his point of view but disagree with his methods of

imposing his beliefs, while others are totally opposed to what he has to say. One day he refers a local teenage girl from one of the wealthiest, most prominent families in town, who finds herself pregnant, to an agency that can help her get through her pregnancy with the choice of keeping her baby or putting it up for adoption. The consequences of this referral lead to some shocking events, as the plot thickens. To divulge more of the story would ruin the suspense that leads to the denouement!

*Unintended Consequences* is a fun read, and one that many of us who live in a small-town environment can relate to. A friend of mine has a sign in her house that says, "I'm glad I live in a small town because if I can't remember what I've been doing, someone else will surely be able to tell me." —Janet La Rue Buck, Alert literary editor

## Alert Readers...

### Bay Valley InnGenuity

The January edition of our small Elberta newsletter featured a story that I read with much displeasure, about Loy Putney wanting to purchase and use the empty Elberta motel as migrant housing.

I, too, have wondered why the building continues to sit empty and unused. I'm sure the economy has much to do with that, but a diamond in the rough is being overlooked, as this building has so much potential. This could again be a viable business with tax revenue and a job creator for our local economy.

It's quiet, has abundant and excellent parking space to accommodate many vehicles (plus extra space if needed), has convenient accessibility to the highway, and is close to everything including shopping and both beaches, and all our area has to offer. Snowmobilers, skiers, boaters, vacationers can't help but love being here and it has lots of room for children to play safely. I have several good ideas but not the financial means to accomplish them. My suggestions are as follows:

1. Restore as a motel and also use the large cafeteria area as a Specialty Gift Shop for our locally made food products, crafts, and artwork. The motel could feature a small café/convenience store open to the public and accessible to the motel patrons for coffee and quick meals.

3. An Activity Day Center for seniors for games and socialization—visiting

with motel people and talking about what Benzie County offers; could also be utilized by the youth after school until 8 pm.

4. An apartment complex for single adult seniors. If two rooms are used for each apartment that would make 8 to 10 small but nice, convenient living quarters. The small café, gift shop, and social area would be a godsend to those living there. This would free them from their large costly-to-maintain home, allowing their house to sell to a family that would love to have a home here.

5. Last but not least, it could be utilized as our local Elberta Farm Market that is so popular and enjoyed by many, many people. This would be a much safer and more convenient location to possibly be utilized all year, outside during the warm months and inside during the winter.

This letter was also mailed to the Elberta Village Council and the Elberta Planning Commission c/o Russ Mix.

*Jeannie Knudsen, Elberta resident*

### Foggy Folklore

Sorry to hear of the plight of the Mayfair. But who came up with the Fog reference? 60 years ago we called it Pea Soup's Place after Eugene "Pea Soup" Luxford the colorful local personality and owner/proprietor, who acquired the

## SUNSET

### We Will Miss...

**WILLIAM "BILL" BACON**  
(July 8, 1929–January 30, 2012)

William "Bill" Bacon passed away at the Maples in Frankfort at the end of January. He was the son of the late Glenn and Lillian Bacon. The family lived on Washington Avenue until they moved to a farm out on Carlson Road.

Bill was one of the last Ann Arbor car ferry captains and served as marine superintendent locally at the Marine Office for several years.

Bill is survived by his son Kim, daughter Beth, sisters Joyce Kirshner, Francis Wyatt, and Edythe Kirk, a brother Larry, stepchildren Chris Thom and Judy Sheets, and a large extended family.

Bill was preceded in death by his wife, Olive, a brother Bromley, and his daughter Lori.

### OOPS! CORRECTIONS

Robert "Butch" McPherson is also survived by his daughter Vicki Fletcher. We regret the omission.

Clarification: The \$300 donation made by Elberta's Parks and Recreation Commission to the Benzonia ice rink last year was unauthorized—not presented to council—and so was technically illegal, according to Reg Manville.

nickname as a child.

*Pat Moyna, via Facebook*

THE ALERT WELCOMES LETTERS FROM OUR READERS! Call or text 231-399-0098, send mail to Elberta Alert Letters, PO Box 357, Elberta, MI 49628, or write to [elberta.alert@gmail.com](mailto:elberta.alert@gmail.com). Letters may be edited for length. Profanity will be indicated but not repeated.

### COUNCIL REPORT, cont'd

personally. What matters is that they have retained their office for 16 years, which is a powerful mandate from our village electorate. We have frozen their pay for three years in a row. We have cut their fringes two years in a row. At the same time we have increased their workload with the addition of the Lifesaving Station rentals. With the failure of Parks and

Rec to maintain proper accounting procedures we have now taken over bookkeeping for Parks and Rec as well as the Solstice and Farmer Market accounts. My management style is to set guidelines, offer help when needed, and to speak directly

if there's a discipline problem. I believe in letting people perform their jobs with as little interference as possible. I feel in a year and a half this philosophy has worked for us. Our employees have met goals I have set for them. Their morale until recently has been high, and the village has benefited from this. They have dedicated their lives to the well-being of this village and we should thank them for that. The attack on our village employees by some of our council members is unwarranted and ill conceived. I watched our former council try to micromanage the garage with the aforementioned disastrous results. I feel that if the council follows the same path with our office it will lead to the same predicament. The village faces a fund balance deficit that did not occur during this administration. We have slashed our spending the last three years and will do so again this year. The state has approved our plan to cut our deficit. Last year our auditor listed two areas we should be targeting in our efforts to become solvent. Cutting our employees' wages, fringe benefits, or hours was not mentioned. This year's budget will cut spending again. I'm asking council to pass this budget so it will be in the state-mandated time frame. The budget must be in place by March 1." The budget was passed with one nay vote, from Diane Jenks.

Ken Holmes said the fire department under Charlie Thompson seems so far conflict free. The department wants a backup truck

continues on page 6



# BLAST From the FUTURE!

Local history topics and interviews by Elberta teens

## Surely Spring Is Almost Here

By Merren Garber

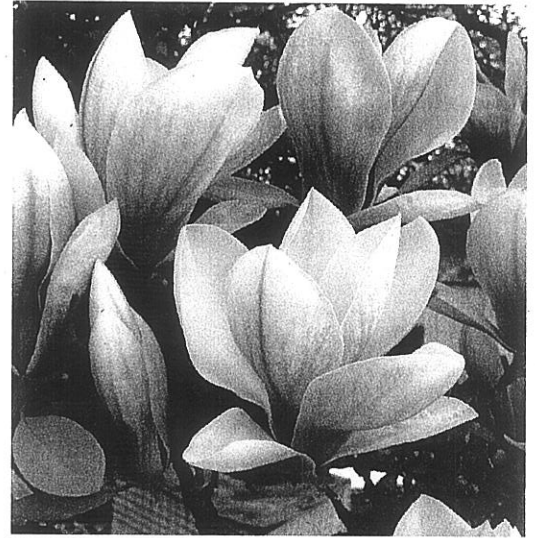
Tiny green stalks of grass shot up from the blanket of snow that is quickly melting away.

Feeling the sun's radiant rays envelop me in a sea of warmth, as it brought promise of warmer climates in the future.

Surely spring is almost here. Blossoms have formed on the bare trees, allowing a sweet fragrance to drift through the gentle breeze for all to enjoy. The snow, that had once created a blanket over the ground, is melting rather quickly, allowing tiny treasures that had been long forgotten to form in its wake.

Surely spring is almost here.

Alert editor Merren Garber is a freshman at Frankfort-Elberta High School.



A magnolia tree blooms on Crapo Street. PHOTO BY JENNIFER WILKINS

### COUNCIL REPORT, cont'd

or bucket truck with a basket to hold two people. A ladder truck starts at half a million dollars, so that's out of the question. The Fire and Safety Committee (Ken and Diane) had not received the final Fire Dept. budget, but noted a discrepancy, two separate figures for our share of first responders expenses. Laura said the second figure was correct, and then said she had done some investigating because when she did the math on the weighted SEVs, she came up with a lot less for our share. She spoke with Josh Mills and confirmed there had been an error and the Village was being overcharged by up to \$3,000 for first responders. This error has now been corrected. The fire department all got a \$25 raise, the first in 3 years.

Linda, Diane, and Kelli Stapleton would attend a conference on economies for the

21st century put on by Kurt Schindler and MSU Extension. The Planning Commission paid Kelli's admission fee.

Council approved the Dune Park Committee's request to proceed with planning for a parking lot that would accommodate about 20 vehicles in time for spring. The plan might also include lavatories and a bike rack. Re grind from Elmer's might be used as paving material. The final plan would come before council. Holly O'Dwyer asked if council had considered acquiring the Bay Valley Inn property for the village, and perhaps installing an RV park there. She referred to Beulah's RV park on Crystal Lake, and suggested the village get a grant to do something similar. Reg mentioned that an RV park had once been considered for the beach. Ken suggested that Holly put a bid on

the Bay Valley Inn property.

Regarding that property, Reg said he had spoken with Carl Noffsinger, zoning administrator. Council had received a letter from Putney's attorney. "We're trying to go step by step. It's a legal issue right now." No permitting process can go forward until Putney owns the property, Reg said. "Carl Noffsinger will keep us informed of developments." In a subsequent phone interview Putney told the *Alert* that the Village office had returned the materials he submitted along with his \$200 deposit. He said his attorney had since resubmitted them again along with a letter. Putney said he didn't understand why migrant housing did not fall under the transient housing/hotel/motel provisions in the current zoning ordinance. Asked if he

had submitted a site plan, he said "It's already zoned commercial. Do we need a site plan if it's already approved [for this use]? [Migrant housing] is short-term rentals—why wouldn't that apply?" Sharyn Bower confirmed in an interview that the office had returned Putney's material and that it had since come back again.



### ON THE RADAR... PHRAGMITES

In November, the Friends of Betsie Bay began an expected multi-year process of eradicating the invasive reed *Phragmites australis* from the Betsie Bay and River. The total area of infestation is estimated at 13 acres. Locals can remember when the mouth of the Betsie was mostly open water, with canoeable stands of cattails. Residents with deeper roots can remember ice skating in the area behind what's now Bayshore Tire and Auto or jumping into a swimming hole there in the summer. Now dense stands of phragmites form a grassy plain between the Village of

Elberta and the narrowing run of the Betsie River. The GoogleEarth images below tell the story: Even considering annual and seasonal water level variations, the dramatic spread of phragmites is evident. The first aquatic herbicide application cost \$7,500 and was paid for through grants from the Cooperative Weed Management Area and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, as well as through private donations. Spring will reveal how much of the treatment "took." Then the dead areas of phragmites will be removed by mowing and/or burning to make room for native plants to reemerge.



APRIL 1998



JUNE 2003

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