

No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing

Volume II

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Why the Phelps County Sheriff's Department received the *Bramlett-Light Respect for Law Award* this year:

The Rolla Optimists gave Blankenship's department the *Respect for Law* award for having more violations on county audits than all other county offices put together, for losing the evidence in over 730 drug cases and getting away with it, for picking a fight with the Phelps County Prosecutor to distract voter attention from Candidate Blankenship's miserable record (it worked), for having 44 vehicles for 54 employees, for making county taxpayers pay for insurance, gas and maintenance so the deputies, their wives or girlfriends (or both) can tool around in really nice seized cars, for having over 17 lawsuits in just 12 years, for never patrolling the county because they prefer to raid drug mules on the Interstate and keep 80% of the take and for beating Ron Wieland senseless in front of my house. But it works for the Optimists even if it makes their club look like his personal PR firm.

The "Bramlett/Light Respect for Law Award" has now descended to the level of the Jane Fonda "*Most Photogenic on a Viet Cong Gun Turret Award*" or the Mark McGuire "*I Don't Dwell on the Past Award*". The Optimists are far too optimistic if they think they can cosmetically rehabilitate *this* Sheriff's Department. There probably are some members of the Sheriff's Department who may not partake of the loot of the Sugar Tree, who may not have done...well, something with the evidence in 730 drug cases or who may not brutally beat people in handcuffs. If so, it's too bad if they get smeared with the Blankenship tar brush because you are known by the company you keep.

Having scraped clean through the bottom of the barrel this year the Optimists should consider changing their award. Next year the Optimists could give the Rolla School Board and Administration "*The Respect for Due Process Award*" or give the City Council, "*The Respect for Private Property Award*" or give Mayor Joe Morgan the, "*Planted the Most Petunia's Award*." Say, how about giving the county's meth cooks "*The Economic Development Award*" for being the fastest growing industry in the county? No, that's not a good idea because it would remind people that the reason our county meth cooks are a growth industry is because the 2005 recipients of "*The Respect for Law Award*" are too busy at Sugar Tree to arrest the local methamphetamine entrepreneurs.

Maybe they should just drop the award altogether before the organization starts losing members who aren't willing to be embarrassed by such blatant political hypocrisy.

'Paz' honored on 90th birthday. In contrast to the Optimist Award, people from Phelps County and all over the state had to stand in line to get into the Community Hall on May 22nd to wish retired Sheriff Tom Pasley a Happy Birthday. People waiting to speak to the Sheriff reminisced about the Good Old Days when the few deputies he had drove their own cars to respond to county calls, when the sheriff conducted his annual fall festival raids on local marijuana patches and when the department arrested burglars and cattle rustlers instead of fighting with the prosecutor. We doubt 'Paz' would ever have spent \$14,000 on fashionable SWAT gear, we're not even sure he ever fired his gun – or wanted to. He thought you ought to use brains before bullets. Pasley's glare and growl was usually enough to sober drunks and chill out brawlers. If the Sheriff knew that what your folks would do to you was worse than what you'd get from the Judge, teenagers were sometimes taken home for 'justice.'

Our favorite Pasley story was when the Pyramid kooks at St. James were suspected of murdering one of their followers then they took out contracts on each other. A murder mystery combined with the delicious nuttiness of the Pyramid People drew reporters like flies from big city papers all over the country; they pestered the Sheriff for details and generally just got underfoot while he was trying to investigate. This wasn't to Sheriff Tom's liking; he is a man of few words has a wicked sense of humor. The Pyramid murder happened after the Jim Jones Kool-aid disaster so Pasley started telling reporters asking for directions to St. James to stop in at the office first and leave a name and phone number so he could contact their next-of-kin...if necessary. Most reporters decided a telephone interview would do as well. Happy Birthday, Sheriff Pasley.

Water District Fiasco – another object lesson in lack of responsibility. As much as everyone relishes preaching to the young that the root of all evil is their lack of personal responsibility, parents elected to public office keep providing one example after another of bad government due to... lack of personal responsibility. No wonder kids are so messed up. And as much as we say about good government vs. the kind we have in Rolla, people just keep doing things the Rolla Way, this case in point is the PWSD debacle.

The **Public Water Supply District** board members were elected to run the water district; they each took their oath of office, added it to their resumes and then they sat back and abdicated their oath of office by taking no personal responsibility for actually running the water district. Having

played at being elected officials; now they've wound up with a wretched mess. Just like the city council and the school board, they let the administrator make all the decisions because it was all just too tedious and too much hard work. Was it really that hard to figure out that the annual rate they charged customers had to be high enough to cover their bond payments plus the annual cost of operating the district? If the children of those same board members had behaved as irresponsibly, oh the sermons they would have preached!

Their first mistake was in believing the story that it was easier to issue revenue bonds and collect a small user fees that wouldn't upset anyone rather than asking voters in the water district to pass GO bonds (property tax levy) to pay off the debt, but getting people to pay for what they wanted would have required something like work. Board members would have had to learn a lot about what they were doing, about board governance and finance so they could answer voter's questions, you know the accountability thing. In addition to responsibility and hard work that would have involved risk – risk of losing the vote. However, if people in the district wanted a water or sewer district badly enough then they should have been willing to bite the bullet and pay for it. If they weren't willing to vote for G.O. Bonds to pay for the amenity then they could do without - it's that simple.

Apparently the person who wanted the water and sewer district the most was real estate developer **Tom Sowers**. With a water/sewer district instead of a private wells and septic tanks, a developer can chop up land into smaller lots and sell lots more lots to lots more people for lots more money. Because his property investment is now at risk, Sowers is blowing the whistle and pointing the finger at the feeble PWSB board which up till now has been most useful in furthering his property development out by the country club. (Who do you think ordered a reporter to report the recent PWSB board meetings, meetings that had never been covered by the paper before?)

Why did the PWSB use revenue bonds instead of GO bonds? Because they were lazy and it was easier to tell voters the millions for construction wouldn't cost them anything than getting voters to pass GO bond issues to finance the construction. We don't know why the PWSB board was so timid about facing the public with a GO bond issue. A small number of city, county and school district voters consistently vote taxes on everyone for anything at all and for much flimsier reasons than clean water.

It's possible that the gullible water board was told that old fairy tale the city council believes, that the statute says "*revenue bond obligations do not constitute indebtedness within the meaning of any constitutional, statutory or charter debt limitation or restriction.*" Not really debt? No harm, no foul, no consequences if it's not paid back? The PWSB board has just found out what the ugly consequences are if they don't come up with the payments.

The council bought this same free lunch story from Butz and Morgan when they issued \$14 million in revenue bonds for Brewer Science. The city's credit rating now hangs by the thread of Brewer Science's ability to make every

single payment on time and in full. The council should pay attention to the lesson provided by the PWSB board before they get into the commercial banking business again.

If a governmental entity, like the City of Rolla or the PWSB, default on revenue bonds *their bond rating plunges to junk bond status* and a lot of nasty consequences are the painful result. In the future, even their GO bonds will carry a very high interest rate; that is if they can get anyone to buy their bonds at all. That's the punishment the marketplace doles out to jerks who default on their bonds. The only way to avoid this virtual bankruptcy of your municipal fiscal reputation is to get the money somehow – any way you can - to make your payments as promised so the bondholders won't break your bond rating kneecaps. The PWSB bond trustee was just about to do that. That's why some people who are connected to the district are now paying double the rate they were told they would have to pay and they will pay even more - so much for the free lunch. Then again, as district voters it was their responsibility to keep an eye on what their board was doing wasn't it? They didn't so their jacked-up rates are the price they will pay for *their* lack of responsibility.

Finally the PWSB board did have an idea of their own. They're begging for volunteers who have knowledge of finances, law and all the other things they, as the elected and responsible officials, were supposed to find out about but didn't. They want these volunteers to be their new Bail-Out-Our-Behinds Committee to help them with what they *still aren't willing to learn to do themselves*. Anyone who takes them up on this offer will be rewarded with a nice big fat share the liability that's staring these admittedly incompetent elected board members in the face. It's like scalping tickets for a berth on the Titanic *after* it hit the iceberg.

Mayor Morgan's Legacy

The Mayor's Whine Breakfast. We hope you got to see the Mayor's April Whine Breakfast on Channel 16. Mayor Joe Morgan didn't do much praying; he just announced that the reason he isn't going to run for a third term is because, "he wants to spend more time with his family" and he bellyached that NSN doesn't like him and that's why he's not going to run again. He's right we don't. We might have if he had ever spared a thought for anyone but himself and his friends but he hasn't. Most politicians, even if they view public office as nothing more than a power base for their own selfish goals, at least have enough savvy to occasionally give the people something they want or stop doing things they hate. Keep citizens happy and they'll usually ignore a modest amount of selfish pocket lining by the people they elect. Two generations of Daly's have run Chicago with an iron grip to the benefit of themselves, their party and their cronies because they are wise enough to make sure that they satisfy their constituents first by collecting their trash, fixing their roads, keeping crime rates down and providing parks, libraries, museums and other services they enjoy. Morgan, however, never let anyone have a crumb off his 'bizzness' table.

After whining about why he was quitting, Morgan started to list his accomplishments over the last eight years

but couldn't think of any except that he was the first Mayor of Rolla to get his hands dirty planting petunias downtown.

It's not really all that hard to remember Joe's accomplishments. Morgan the 'bizzness' mayor, despite huge citizen's protests, forced the community to choke down loosening the zoning code on pornography because he wanted taxes at any price – even from hard core porn videos. For 8 years he has repeatedly tried to destroy Buehler Park for the benefit of the Chamber of Commerce – an organization that's getting so fat on the public dole that they can afford to buy country club memberships for their director.

People only wanted a modest recreation center for senior citizens with a six-lane pool for the kids, instead Morgan let Moorkamp and other elitists destroy the kid's outdoor swimming pool and replace it with a birdbath and an overbuilt center that is too expensive for most Rolla taxpayers and their families to use. They're forced to pay for it but they can't afford to use it. Well, those poor people and their kids don't need recreation anyway; they should be out looking for jobs so they won't be poor. Morgan promised that he, the great 'bizzness' expert, would make it a 100% recapture operation but now they're spending more money to hire the same consultant that helped them eliminate what people in Rolla really wanted the first time to tell them why it isn't working. The consultant will get paid a second time to tell them why his advice was wrong the first time. Tax Increment Financing I and II – hopefully, Morgan's last bad idea - is an example of confiscation of private property for state central planning. In Russia they called that Communism but it was such a flop they gave it up. Given another term Morgan would be confiscating our guns and billeting troops in our homes.

Then there is the Morgan caboose décor, the fountain that doesn't fount, the bumpouts or as Morgan calls them the "pedestrian visibility enhancements," (the less said about those the better) and the \$6.5 million (and counting) "No Tax Increase" GO bond issue to make City Hall splendiferous and most importantly to build Joe's Road while sucking the capital improvements fund dry. Even without going into his waste of money pursuing impractical regional jails and regional landfills, (both were failed Morgan experiments in "running government like a bizzness"), and our personal favorite – the City Council Dog Trials, Morgan's most enduring legacy unfortunately, is that his bullying attitude and paranoia have set back what little open and accountable government Rolla had by about 25 years. He wouldn't have been able to do this however without the council's willing collaboration. He only presides over THEIR meetings, they aren't HIS meetings but still they didn't have the backbone to reprimand him for bullying their own constituents and they never denied him an illegal closed session that he needed to hide public business from the public. Morgan isn't done yet. The following two items are the most recent 'accomplishments' he's added to The Morgan Legacy.

Walgreens is not coming to Perfectville! Lebanon is crowing that the Walgreens store planned for Rolla is locating in Lebanon instead. This is one Morgan "accomplishment"

that can't be blamed on "naysayers" or the Williams Road homeowners. Walgreens walked only because of Joe Morgan's stubborn instance that the Callen property be included in his TIF zone. Jeannie Greers, the attorney for Walgreens developers, came to the June 2, 2003 council meeting and told them in no uncertain terms that her clients didn't want to have anything to do with a TIF. She said they had been involved with three TIF projects in St. Louis and they did nothing but generate ill will from their customers. She also told them they were ready to start construction within a few weeks if the council would just take the TIF curse off Callen's lot. Morgan rudely tried to shut her up and have the conversation illegally in closed session but she refused because she, unlike the lawyer sitting next to Morgan, knew that discussing public policy in secret was illegal. She also wanted people to know her clients had previous experience with Rolla's TIF Preferred Developer Kaplan Co. and they didn't want to repeat the experience - now we know why. Morgan wouldn't back down because once Joe gets a bad idea he never lets go of it, so the property stayed in the TIF zone. A year later Walgreens was negotiating a new land deal in Lebanon and TIF I failed anyway. Now he's starting TIF II to hang around the next mayor's neck.

It's good to be the Mayor. We found another Morgan 'accomplishment' hiding in the closed session minutes for May 16, 2005. They tell that Public Works Director Steve Hargis used visual aids to identify two acres owned by **Joseph and Molly Morgan** along Joe's Road. This is the same new street that has a brand new one quarter mile long 7 foot tall cedar fence smack up against the sidewalk which is smack up against the partial road. You've got to go look at it, it looks freaking ridiculous. The fence is the product of an agreement between the city and the mayor and it cost the city taxpayers **\$24,721.63** and now they will have the cost of maintaining it forever. Staff (that's just Hargis) requested authorization to purchase Tract 3 for the development of the proposed bike trail extension along Deible Creek that runs through Joe's subdivision. Hargis told the Council that staff (that's still Hargis) is proposing to pay a total of **\$29,126.33** for Morgan's two acres. A motion was made by Matt Williams and seconded by Don Barklage to offer the Mayor and his wife \$29,126.33 for their two acres as recommended by the Mayor's Director of Public Works (that's Hargis). The roll call vote was unanimous. This transaction *was not reported* in the "news" paper. The Mayor 'accomplished' a total of **\$53,847.96** and a free road to his subdivision out of the city's pocket and the project isn't even done yet. And he couldn't think of anything he'd accomplished but planting petunias.

Morgan fouls John Wiggins RMU appointment. In appointing ex-circuit judge **John Wiggins** to the RMU board to serve the remainder of Dain Ward's term which expires in August, the Mayor demanded that the council's vote also include appointment for Wiggins to the next four year term! Why stop at adding an extra term, why not two extra terms or three or five? This attempt to lock in Wiggins in for four years and three months instead of just the few months of the

unexpired term is so childish it had to come from Morgan and/or the RMU board members, Alfermann, Jenks and Stoffer. They're very worried that the growing mood from the council means that RMU board will have to get down off their pedestals and stop being RCDC's private Cash Cow. (Two of the four previous RMU board members were also RCDC board members, but Alfermann has now been elevated to the RCDC board so there are still two.)

Ex-Circuit Judge John Wiggins, having just retired from being an upholder of the law, shouldn't have permitted his RMU appointment to start with an illegal vote, but then why should we assume that he bothered to read the law pertaining to this position he agreed to take – obviously no one else read it including the city's lawyer, the city administrator, the entire council and the RMU board members. It's much better to run a city by the Pin-the-Tail-On-the-Donkey method. That's where they stumble around blindfolded hoping they get the tail somewhere in the vicinity of the ass. As usual they missed by a mile.

The city's own ordinance plainly says, "*Vacancies in the board of public works, occasioned by removals, resignations or otherwise, shall be reported to the mayor and be filled in like manner as original appointments, except that if the vacancy is an unexpired term, the appointment shall*

be made for only the unexpired portion of that term." Sorry Joe, that one's a do-over over unless, of course, Wiggins wants to make his illegal appointment a public declaration that he's already signed up with RMU's We-Get-To-Do-Whatever-We-Want-Because-We-Can Club.

Good by more street work '06. The city secretly bought the old Waffle House property up at the Hy 63/I-44 intersection for \$350,000. They've hired Maggi to demolish it for \$14,180.

Phelps County Commissioners Want You...to come to a public hearing at **7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 28** in the **Multipurpose Room of the Courthouse** to give them your opinion on whether they should collaborate in a plan by the City of Rolla and RREC (the Rolla Regional Economic Commission), to double the size of the present Enterprise Zone (EZ) so we can sacrifice more property taxes for the city's proposed **Expanded** Enterprise Zone (EEZ). If you can't get there on June 28th, you can also email your comments to the Phelps County Commissioners: Bud Dean c/o carol.bennett@phelpscounty.org Larry Stratman: larry.stratman@phelpscounty.org or Randy Verkamp: rverkamp@charter.net

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