

THE REPUBLIC

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"We shall endeavor to make our paper the champion of the people of Bartholomew County and we shall advocate, irrespective of political considerations, all measures that have for their object the good of the community. In short, we hope to make our paper such as no intelligent person in the county can do without."

— Isaac T. Brown,
 Founding Editor, 1875

Downtown growing pains soon will ease

THERE can be no denying the frustrations experienced by business owners and downtown patrons during construction of the Fourth Street entertainment district during the past two-plus months.

Originally, engineers projected that the removal of sidewalks and the roadway between Jackson and Franklin streets, followed by development of a pedestrian-friendly zone, would be completed by Nov. 7. The work is finally ending three weeks later.

The process has taken its toll on business owners and their customers. Some downtown merchants have said they lost thousands of dollars in traffic.

While frustrations are understandable, so are the delays. Most have been weather-related or caused by unforeseen snags.

Certainly the merchants and their customers should be commended for their patience, but plaudits also should be extended to city officials and members of the construction staffs for their extraordinary approach in keeping the public informed of the project's status.

Those involved conducted weekly meetings with business owners and residents to keep them updated on the progress and to hear concerns. Media coverage of the work was thorough and constant. Throughout the process, all involved — including construction workers on the job — went out of their way to assist pedestrians trying to navigate the sometimes confusing alternative paths lined by yellow tape.

City officials were quick to deal with some of the snags, expediting responses so as to not further delay the project.

Admittedly, it has been difficult to look beyond the mess in the downtown area that has been an unavoidable result of all the work, but this week observers have been able to gain an appreciation of what is to come.

The idea behind the Fourth Street concept has always been to enhance and further develop a pivotal entertainment district in downtown. The narrow sidewalks served as an impediment to that goal, especially for the restaurants and bars that make up a significant percentage of the two-block stretch.

Added lighting will help make the area more user-friendly, especially for diners who enjoy eating outdoors. The project also will contribute to attracting and enlarging major events, such as Neighborhood and the Biggest Block Party Ever.

In the end, the project should be a magnet, drawing even more people to the downtown. That, by itself, should make a lot of people happy.

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HOME IN THE SKY

After 30 years of flying, woman passes plane down to another generation

FOR something like 30 years, Nancy Warren's second home has been the sky. There have been times, I imagine, when she considered it her first home.

Nancy has been a pilot since she got her first certificate in her 50s. She's 84 now.

Flying to her has been an essential — sometimes routine — part of life. Most of us wake up in the morning needing to get from Point A to Point B and set out walking or driving. Many times, Nancy made the journey through the air.

For the past 25 years she has used her beloved Cessna 177 Cardinal airplane for the journeys. She's treated it as an offspring, carefully monitoring and maintaining it and leaving nothing to chance.

When she turned 80, she and the Cardinal still were flying. She also became a member of a select group called the UFOs, the shortened version of United Flying Octogenarians.

"You have to be flying as pilot in command at age 80 or older to be eligible," she said earlier this week. "When I joined there were only nine UFOs in Indiana. Today there are 25."

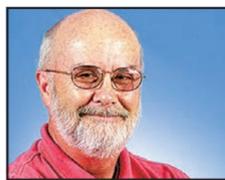
Although she remained in good health, Nancy was preparing to face the inevitable — that day when she no longer could fly.

"I didn't want to wait until I had gone past that time and incurred a bad experience — for me, the airplane or anyone else," she said recently. "I also didn't want to lose my license to fly or have it taken from me."

She cut back on her time in the air, basing her flights on how she felt. "I never flew on days when I didn't feel well and strong," she said.

Both she and the Cardinal were judged as fit. This year she passed her flight physical easily. The Cardinal also passed its required annual inspection with flying colors.

Despite that, Nancy knew that the time had arrived to ground herself. She made the decision to quit flying over breakfast in a Florida restaurant. She



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also gave away her beloved Cardinal ... to the two college students, young enough to be her grandsons, sitting across from her in that restaurant.

It was two years ago that one of those young men — Thomas Kieffer — phoned Nancy after having read a book about her flying experiences. He also was a pilot, having qualified for his certificate at the Greenwood airport. He asked if they could meet and "talk about flying."

That was the first of several meetings between the two. At one of them, Thomas brought along another pilot friend — Eric DeBusk. The two young men met when they were qualifying for their pilot's licenses. Their mutual love of flying proved to be a natural bridge for Nancy to cross.

"Both of them so impressed me," she said. "They are always courteous and respectful, but we have found so many ways to have fun with each other."

Most of the fun involved flying. "I still recall climbing into the rear seat of their rented Cherokee 140 one time so that we could fly to lunch and do some shopping," she recalled.

The three shared flying duties on several flights after that, many of them in Nancy's Cardinal.

Earlier this year they mapped out their most challenging experience — an eight-hour excursion to Sarasota, Fla. It took them two days to get there. Along the way the trio encountered horrible weather and were forced to land at the nearest airports on a number of occasions.

"The boys took turns in the left seat as PIC (pilot in command), while I rode in the right seat," Nancy recalled. "It gave

me time to observe how well they flew individually, their teamwork and their judgment in dealing with the weather conditions. They did a great job."

They reached their destination and met the next morning for breakfast. By then Nancy was clear on what she wanted to do.

"I said that I had something to tell them," Nancy said. "They looked up, and I told them I was giving the Cardinal to them. Thomas looked stunned, and I think Eric had tears in his eyes."

"We were shocked and amazed," Eric recalled. "We didn't know what to say."

Thomas remembered that he and Eric simply looked at each other and kept laughing. "We felt like we were bouncing off the wall, we were so excited. It was something we couldn't possibly have imagined."

It took several weeks for the necessary paperwork to be completed. Nancy has returned to the air, but only as a passenger. Earlier this month they made another of their lunch/shopping trips — this one to Missouri.

Although the difference in their ages is significant, none of the three gave much thought to it.

"Age just doesn't affect Nancy," Eric said. "She's always positive."

Thomas thinks of it in terms of their mutual love — flying.

"When aviators get together, there is no age difference," he said.

The plane is presently berthed in a hangar in North Vernon. Because of school demands — Thomas is a sophomore at Purdue University, and Eric is studying mechanical engineering at the Purdue College of Technology in Columbus — it has not seen much flight time recently, but that likely will change during the holiday break.

The three already are mapping out their next lunch, and it's unlikely that it'll be served in Indiana.

Harry McCawley is associate editor of The Republic. He can be reached by phone at 379-5620 or email at harry@therepublic.com.

Nancy Warren is flanked by fellow pilots Eric DeBusk, left, and Thomas Kieffer in front of the plane she gave to the young men earlier this year.



LETTERS

Legislative offices act as liaisons to government

From: Pamela Weiss
 Columbus

Received: Nov. 26

As a former staff member for the Michigan House of Representatives, I offer kudos to Lee Hamilton for his Nov. 26 column "Serving constituents critical for government to prosper." I would characterize legislative office workload with a "60-20-20" rule: 60 percent of your work is generated by constituent needs, 20 percent is the demanding legislative schedule, and 20 percent is pure policy work.

Candidates for public office, typically motivated by policy goals, are frequently surprised to confront the demand for constituent services once elected. Legislative offices must act as liaisons to various government departments to resolve constituent issues. Setting constituent service goals must be equally important with legislative policy goals.

I always set response time goals for constituent correspondence and resolution of casework, regardless of a constituent's political views. People remember if their mail is unanswered or they get a cursory response. Officials ignore constituent services at their peril, especially in swing districts. I can think of races in which poor constituent service was the tipping point for casting an incumbent from office.

Lee Hamilton strikes the right attitude about public service — constituents come first.

Public Pre-K programs not what voters wanted

From: Larry Jackson
 Columbus

Received: Nov. 26

I'm very concerned that BCSC will choose to not accept the real meaning and importance of the recent voter's rejection of the tax referendum supporting pre-kindergarten at BCSC. True,

the majority of voters are in no mood for a property tax increase, but that is only part of the message. Many question the wisdom and necessity of any kind of Pre-K program at BCSC. It should never have been started in the first place.

Few, if any, doubt the value of early childhood education. Maybe in some communities a public Pre-K program makes sense, but not in Columbus, Indiana, where we have many excellent private programs.

We must recognize and respect the fact that not all parents desire Pre-K education for their children. I don't agree with that thinking, but, as parents, that is their right. For financially strapped parents that wish a Pre-K education for their children, there should be funding available from various foundations in Bartholomew County for full or partial vouchers.

A relatively inexpensive voucher program makes far more sense than a bloated multimillion-dollar public Pre-K

program. One has to question the real intent of BCSC. Why would they offer services from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. for a few hours of Pre-K instruction each day? It sounds more like taxpayer-subsidized day care than education. Is that what BCSC really has in mind?

Do we want our local school corporation to become a glorified baby-sitting service? Of course not!

We all need to be diligent in making sure that BCSC does not try an end run and circumvent the results of the recent referendum vote by proceeding with a "bigger and better Pre-K program."

One has only to look at the consistently high ISTEP scores of the much smaller private grade schools in Bartholomew County to see that bigger is not necessarily better.

The voters have spoken. It is time for BCSC to do the right thing and acknowledge the referendum results by dismantling their Pre-K program at the end of the current school year.