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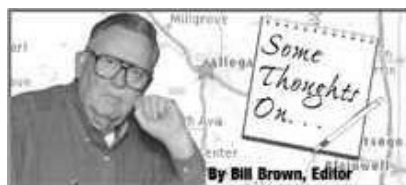
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Thursday August 2, 2007

## Some Thoughts On...

Wednesday, August 1, 2007 10:42 AM EDT

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**After reading some of the testimony** that came out of the hearing where the Michigan House Regulatory Reform Committee passed a resolution to approve the Gun Lake Casino Class III gaming compact 6-0, with both Democrats and Republicans supporting the measure, I have serious doubts about a couple of things ... First, I'm saddened that Sen. Patty Birkholz testified against the measure using the argument that she was afraid Allegan County would receive economic benefits from the casino at the expense of downtown Grand Rapids ... Now, we've known for a long time that Birkholz acts more like a representative of Grand Rapids than she does a representative of Allegan County, we just never knew why ... Rumors are rampant that the "Purple Darling" of the Grand Rapids gentry is eyeing a run at a statewide office and she will be rewarded by them with support—and campaign funds ... With her to testify against the Gun Lake Indians was Sen. Mark Jansen, R-Grand Rapids ... He had the audacity to tell the committee he was fearful the casino would negatively impact people in Allegan County "already addicted to harmful behaviors" ... He reminded everyone that Allegan county was known as the "Meth Capital of Michigan" ... I remember Birkholz being amongst those who perpetuated that description of Allegan County a couple of years back when she and another group here in the county were working to enact laws in Michigan that were already being successful in other states, to fight meth ... We became the "Meth Capital of Michigan," even though there were probably more "Meth Heads" across the border in Kent County than there were here ... Our mistake was allowing that slogan to ever take hold ... We should never have been labeled like that ... It generated funds for our cops and social agencies, but it cast Allegan County in the worst possible light ... There are those who still seek to perpetuate that "Meth Capital of Michigan" title for Allegan County ... Shame on you, Sen. Birkholz for continuing your efforts to woo your Grand Rapids suitors at the expense of the Gun Lake

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tribe and their efforts to make life better for their members and to pass on to their Allegan County, neighbors a more hopeful economic future ... As for Sen. Jansen, nobody in Grand Rapids should be shaking their finger at those of us in Allegan County want a better future for our people—not when your streets are aflame with violence, your city is divided with strife and hopelessness and you dare to lecture our “already addicted” people on what’s best for us ... When I think of all the money and wasted effort that has been put forth by those rich and arrogant people in Grand Rapids to thwart the Gun Lake Indians in their quest to receive equal and fair treatment, I am reminded of a quote by poet Robert Frost ... In his poem “The Death of the Hired Man,” he wrote, “And nothing to look backward to with pride, And nothing to look forward to with hope” ... That sums up what Jansen and his backers have to look forward to.

**Which brings me to another point** ... Perhaps I’m being overly sensitive about a recently revealed survey and the results of that survey, conducted by a county organization whose purpose is to try and stem the tide of drug use in Allegan County ... I have to wonder whether they do more harm than good ... A local daily newspaper has already used the survey to write a story where the lead paragraph reads, “About 70 percent of high school juniors in Allegan County have drunk alcohol in the past year, while one in three has used marijuana, the kids say” ... This brings back those headlines from two and three years ago where this same group reveled in those headlines and TV news stories that trumpeted the questionable fact that we were the, “Meth Capital of Michigan” ... It was crazy...On the one handsome of us were proclaiming what a great place Allegan County was to bring your family and your businesses to make a future for yourselves, and on the other hand, there were those convinced we had an evil, meth dealer on every corner ... Now this group, still trying to do good, is going into local schools and asking kids in grades 7, 9 and 11, questions about their sex lives and what drugs and alcohol they prefer and how often do they partake of it? ... Vaguely recalling my life at those ages, I either would have been too embarrassed to answer, or, as a joke, I would have exaggerated my experiences with any of those things ... Our drug of choice back in those days was limited to putting two aspirin in a Coco-Cola and after drinking it, swearing we were intoxicated ... I think these surveys are taken just to give somebody something to do and/or spend funds that need to be spent in order qualify for more next year ... I’m not sure if perhaps parental permission should be required before strangers are authorized to ask my kids questions of this nature ... And do you know what they called this line of questioning?...The Pride School Survey! ... What label will they put on Allegan County next? ... “Meth Capital of Michigan” has obviously not run its course ... I’m afraid to try and guess.

**I have been informed** that the gymnasium at Allegan High School was used for the graduation ceremonies because the Performing Arts Center is way too small for the overflow crowd who attend those ceremonies ... That is the only reason the gym is used for graduation.

**Of 83 counties in Michigan**, 72 experienced higher unemployment rates this June than they did one year ago ... Allegan County had a rate of 6.3 percent ... Kent was 6.2 percent ... Ionia was 7.3 percent ... Highest in the state was Baraga, at 13.2 percent ... Mackinac County was low at 3.9 percent.

**In another week** the high schools in Allegan County will be getting their football players together for their conditioning workouts ... Most schools will have played two football games already by the time the first day of school rolls around on Sept. 4 ... Where oh where has the summer gone? ... We’re down to less than a month before the college football

season kicks-off, too ... How far away is the first autumn weather?

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