Houston, You Have a Problem

Houston is huge. It’s the nation’s fourth-largest city, both in land and in people. Ten times the size of the nation’s capital, it has triple the population. You may never have been there, and yet somehow you know what it’s like. It’s the biggest city in America built on a swamp.

Houston is also the only American city with a climate that permits snow. And even though the city doesn’t have certain land-use regulations — the most notable being zoning — it has the same degree that seems to be a question of semantics. Mathematical Festa, a professor of land use at a Houston university, says that the city “does have certain land-use regulations — they’re just not labeled ‘zoning.’

The important thing, says Festa, is not what you call land use regulation, “what’s more important is to have a discussion about whether the urban area zoning system is working for all residents. That doesn’t seem to be happening. The problem is there’s no comprehensive plan.”

Ryon Holeywell interviewed Festa for the blog Urban Edge.

“As decisions about building are made,” Holeywell wrote, “they’re oftentimes made without any deliberation or public discussion of the environmental impact of the construction of a high-rise in their community. The high-rise was allowed to move forward — it didn’t violate zoning rules — but [in 2014] a judge ordered developers to pay residents $1.2 million in damages because it was considered a nuisance.

Ryon added, "For the people of the city of Houston, their appeal of the court’s decision was considered a nuisance.

A Houstonian submitted his claim to the city council, who then filed a lawsuit against the developers. The lawsuit went to court, and the judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The developers then appealed the decision, and the case was eventually settled out of court."
temperatures. Current-day temperatures have risen since just a few decades ago. That relevant end result is that there is 3-5 percent more moisture in the atmosphere than where there used to be. And that’s just on the surface.

“Not only are the surface waters of the Gulf unusually warm right now,” Mann continues in a blog post, “but there is a deep layer of warm water that Harvey was able to feed upon when it intensified at near record pace as it neared the coast. Human-caused warming is penetrating down into the ocean warming not just the surface but creating deeper layers of warm water in the Gulf and elsewhere.

“So Harvey was almost certainly more intense than it would have been in the absence of human-caused warming, which means stronger winds, more wind damage, and a larger storm surge.”

“Finally, the more tenuous but potentially relevant climate factors: part of what has made Harvey such a devastating storm is the way it has stalled right near the coast, continuing to pummel Houston and surrounding regions with a seemingly endless deluge which will likely top out at nearly 4 feet of rainfall over a several days-long period before it is done.

“The stalling is due to very weak prevailing winds which are failing to steer the storm off to sea, allowing it to spin around and wobble back and forth like a top with no direction. This pattern, in turn, is associated with a greatly expanded subtropical high pressure system over much of the U.S. right now, with the jet stream pushed well to the north. This pattern of subtropical expansion is predicted in model simulations of human-caused climate change.”

“More tenuous, but possibly relevant still, is the fact that very persistent, nearly ‘stationary’ summer weather patterns of this sort, which are linked in place for many days at a time, appears to be favored by human-caused climate change....

“In conclusion, while we cannot say climate change ‘caused’ hurricane Harvey (that is an ill-posed question), we can say that it exacerbated several characteristics of the storm in a way that greatly increased the risk of damage and loss of life.”

The Texas Tribune and ProPublica teamed up for a study of Houston’s flooding problem last year. Their reporters spoke to scientists who said that the Harris County Flood Control District, “which manages thousands of miles of floodwater-eroding bayous and helps enforce development rules, should focus more on preserving green space and managing growth, The City of Houston, too. And they say everyone should plan for more torrential rainfall because of the changing climate. (A host of cities in the U.S. and around the world are doing so.)

“But county and city officials responsible for addressing flooding largely reject these arguments. Houston’s two top flood control officials say their biggest challenge is not managing rapid growth but retrofitting outdated infrastructure. Current standards that govern how and where developers and residents can build are mostly sufficient, they say. And all the recent monster storms are freak occurrences — not harbingers of global warming or a sign of things to come.

“The longtime head of the flood control district flat-out disagrees with scientific evidence that shows development is making flooding worse. Engineering projects can reverse the effects of land development and are doing so, Mike Talbott said in an interview ... before his retirement after 18 years heading the powerful agency. (His successor shares his views.)”

[6] All the Gold in Fort Knox? Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin recently visited Fort Knox — the first visit of a civilian to the gold repository since 1974. The ostensible reason was to ascertain whether the gold was still there. We hate to appear disloyal, but a visit from a member of Donald Trump’s cabinet does not constitute reassurance. And it did not help that the visit took place during the solar eclipse.

Birds Brains of a Feather

We see where Governor Chris Sununu has a nice sit-down with the Rochester 9/12 Project on Monday, August 14th. The Rochester 9/12 Project is the local franchise of a national organization created in March of 2009 by that noted political thinker, Glenn Beck. The name purports to memorialize the spirit of national unity which ensued af-
The timing of its founding, though, when coupled with the founder’s known antipathies, suggests it was formed primarily to oppose the administration of the man who was inaugurated as President just two months before.

The meeting “was not announced on [the Governor’s] public schedule,” is the delicate way WMUR’s John DStaso put it.

A cynical person might suspect that the Governor was trying to keep the public in the dark because the founder of the Rochester 9/12 Project, Jerry DeLemus, is in prison for conspiracy to commit an offense against the U.S. and interstate travel in aid of extortion.

DeLemus went to Nevada in 2014 to help millionaire welfare deadbeat Cliven Bundy cheat the government out of grazing fees.

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More Right Wing Schmoozing

A news release from Granite State Progress (GSP) says Frank Edelblut, Governor Sununu’s hand-picked Education Commissioner, will be the keynote speaker at a “Right of Center” political strategy meeting in September.

“The bi-weekly meetings are organized by former House Speaker Bill O’Brien and the Hon. Stephen Stepanek under the banner of Liberty Tree Consulting Services, and hosted at the Koch-funded Americans for Prosperity office,” according to the release.

Liberty Tree Consulting’s website says the meetings are “for elected officials and political activists, centering around how to improve communication in N.H. through a center right agenda.” Their goal is to “create Right of Center political progress” in New Hampshire.

GSP says “Commissioner Edelblut is not an elected official and New Hampshire commissioners typically don’t engage in partisan politics in their official roles — although Commissioner Edelblut has frequently done so with Governor Chris Sununu’s blessing. The public has a right to know if Edelblut has been participating all along — and whether any other members of Governor Sununu’s leadership team are participating in partisan politics in their official capacities.”

Apropos of Nothing Much …

Legend, a British film released in 2015, tells the story of the infamous Kray twins, Reggie and Ronnie, gangsters who titillated and terrorized London in the 1950s and 60s. Tom Hardy plays both twins, with all his characteristic menace. Emily Browning plays Reggie’s wife, Frances Shea. During a period when Reggie’s right-hand man is having great success, Frances observes, “As long as their health didn’t suffer, the high rollers loved rubbing elbows with gangsters. Aristocrats and criminals have a lot in common. They’re both selfish, get bored easily, and have access to wads of cash they didn’t have to work honestly to get. The topper: neither have any interest in bourgeois rules or morality.”

It’s Time To Save The Times Building

Most of the new buildings in town that have been greeted with expressions of horror were constructed on sites that were leveled in the Sixties. Were it not for the ensuing half-century gap, their reception would have been even more hostile.

Imagine the reaction if one of these new monsters were replacing even run-down old houses with which we were familiar. The likely reaction would be one of disgust: “We traded that for this?”

Right now, on State Street, stands the Times Building: four stories of brick, narrow but deep, with granite lintels and a few arched windows at street level in the front. It sits across from the elegant granite Custom House, and beside the imposing granite South Church. Together the three buildings represent one ventricle of the city’s heart.

The Times Building was never intended to be grand, but time has given it a measure of grandeur — certainly enough to make it irreplaceable. Anything that took its place would be doomed to disfavor by comparison.

Damaged by fire this spring, its owner intends to destroy it. To its great credit, the City is saying “No.” A fight will surely ensue.

Before it throws in the towel the City should take every step in its power to prevent the building’s destruction — right up and including the exercise of the power to take the building by eminent domain — and damn the consequences.

Speaking of buildings being knocked down …

There used to be a small brick building of no particular account, located on Daniel Street, in front of where Caffe Kilim used to be.

Knowing the little building was about to come down and make way for something grander, we photographed it a month or two ago. We would have run one of those photos in this issue, but due to some digital mishap, they seem to have vanished.

Other than that, there’s nothing left but the handtruck, and, once in a while, as we haul papers to RiverRun with the handtruck, a few memories.

Handcrafted Food + Fine Beer Since 1991

Late Night Menu + LaPanza Lounge + Large Parties + Beer Garden

The New Hampshire Gazette, Friday, September 1, 2017 — Page 3
Robert Jesurum Addresses NHDOT

To the Editor:

This is a letter I wrote to NHDOT [New Hampshire Department of Transportation] trying to stop the Town of Rye and WBTSCC [Wentworth by the Sea Country Club] from succeeding in getting NHDOT to let them park on Wentworth Road, their highway by Sanders Poynt. For anyone who wishes to add their voice on this issue, the address of NHDOT is:

Ms. Victoria Sheehan, Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Transportation
John O. Morton Building
PO Box 483, 7 Hazen Drive
Concord, New Hampshire 03302-0483

Ms. Sheehan:

You may be aware of a legal dispute I had with Wentworth by the Sea Country Club over access to Little Harbor Beach in Rye. In October 2012, WBTSCC built a fence, placed boulders in the road and planted junipers in front of the area called Sanders Poynt, completely blocking access to both Little Harbor and its beach. Although that little parcel of land was owned by WBTSCC, it had been public, prescriptive rights land for over 20 years, if not hundreds of years. This has now been affirmed by the Rockingham Superior Court and the NH Supreme Court after four plus years of litigation. I believe that the motion of WBTSCC was to prevent the public from getting to the Little Harbor Beach, essentially privatizing it and increasing the property values alongside the beach, owned by the club.

The town of Rye, through its selectmen, has exhibited reprehensible behavior. First, although Sanders Poynt that has been some-thing over 20 years, if not hundreds of years. This has now been affirmed by the Rockingham Superior Court and the NH Supreme Court after four plus years of litigation. I believe that the motion of WBTSCC was to prevent the public from getting to the Little Harbor Beach, essentially privatizing it and increasing the property values alongside the beach, owned by the club.

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Robert Jesurum
Rye, N.H.

[Note: We asked Mr. Jesurum for permission to run the above letter. He granted that permission and thanked us for "all the space you’ve given to this little story." We reprinted it as is.]

Tragedy all the way around.

WBTSCC had clearly lost in court, the town joined forces with WBTSCC, filing court papers describing me as “intransigent” and acknowledging that it had helped WBTSCC develop Plan B-4, which had also been forwarded to NHDOT for approval. That plan still blocked access to Little Harbor Beach with fences and a gate. Fortunately, the Rockingham Superior Court again ruled in my favor, clearly stating that beach access was to be allowed, including the posting of “Beach Access” signage.

Why is I writing to you now? After the court’s rulings, we have a Sanders Poynt that has been somehow related. That is different — not physical, but it’s related. That is different — not physical, but it’s related.

Parking should not be denied now, including the posting of “Beach Access” signage.

Mr. Jesurum’s letter was a powerful reminder of the need to preserve public access to beaches and coastal areas. We must continue to fight for the rights of all citizens to enjoy the natural beauty of our state. Thank you for your continued support of our efforts to protect New Hampshire’s beaches and coastal areas.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
We’ve regressed from a state of being where we were able to rest on our own laurels, feeling worthwhile and secure, knowing we were honest and capable of doing the right thing, to a state of wanting: wanting to be slim, beautiful, and have a trophy mate; wanting a big house, three cars, two boats and an ATV; wanting to have an advanced degree, fine clothes, and collect expensive wine; wanting to win the lottery and be the envy of all our friends.

We’ve slid from an authentic state of being based on timeless values to a pathological state of wanting without end. Buddhists would call these in- suitable cravings the realm of ghastly ghosts.

The more secular, materialistic, and instrumental we have become, the more our cravings have increased until we now worship a different kind of god: those favored few who satisfy their larger-than-life cravings by any means necessary—walking rough-shod over all who cross their path. We call them celebrities.

In the long run, what we wish for, we were bound to get. It was only a matter of time before one of these celebrities would claw himself to the top, exterminating all rivals with taunts, threats, and bald-faced lies, to become our President.

Congratulations Donald Trump! You are the first celebrity ruthless enough and immoral enough to successfully render our democratic traditions null and void.

Funny thing, though … Now Trump has become president, rather than fulfilling his campaign promises, he is acting like an escaped balloon pumped too full of air, chaotically spinning out of control, without purpose or direction, losing air and altitude as he goes.

How could it be otherwise. He has no inner compass to guide him. No empathy, values, or spirituality to help him distinguish right from wrong. He isn’t governing a spreadsheet of widgets to maximize profits but real, flesh-and-blood human beings who need his help.

He is an addict to his cravings like a heroin addict willing to steal from his mother. But don’t think we are all that different.

We are all addicts to our cravings and that is why we can’t muster the gumption to reform ourselves or our government. That’s not just my opinion. It coincides with the view of Gabor Mate, Canadian physician, writing in the current issue of Psychotherapy Networker. He takes issue with the widespread view that an addiction is an individual choice or an inherited disease. Mate makes the case that “addictive patterns of behavior are rooted in the alienation and emotional suffering that are inseparable from Western capitalist cultures, which, by favoring striving and acquiring over noticing and caring for another, end up short-changing — and too often traumatizing — children and families.”

I think Mate makes a legitimate argument. Rather than government being the enemy, it is time for government to step up, as it did with the New Deal during the 1930s, to nurture the connections between members of every family, especially those in need, understanding that family and community are the glue which holds our society together.

I’m not advocating the overthrow of capitalism. That would be impossible right now. But I am advocating a return to civility and honoring the values that did make us great, along with a larger role for government in reducing the historically high, yet still rising, level of income inequality between the rich and the rest of us.

We can start by work to begin level- ing the playing field by providing all Americans with universal health care, a livable wage, a dignified retirement, and affordable but excellent education for all.

If we don’t nurture the connective tissue that unites us, our remarkable American experiment in democracy and self-government will slip away and we will find ourselves hostages in a living, collective nightmare, eaten alive by hungry ghosts.

* Psychotherapy Networker, July/August 2017, page 33–35

Jean Stimmell

Northwood, N.H.

Joan: This country needs a good therapist.

We nominate you.

The Editor

= He Loves the Kool-Aid

To the Editor: Democrats [passim] policies and actions are so harmful to most people, especially poor people, that Democrats need scapegoats to divert attention away from the harm their policies do. The rich, especially the one percent, are favorite Democrat scapegoats.

According to Democrats, not only are the rich to blame but they’re (supposedly) bad people who don’t pay their “fair share.” President Obama claimed he would solve everyone’s problems and make the rich pay their “fair share.” But President Obama didn’t solve people’s problems; his policies made most people, except the rich, poorer.

Actually Democrats love the rich and don’t want anything to alienate the rich donors who attend their $40,000-a-plate fund-raisers, maxi- mize their campaign contributions, and donate millions to Democrat PACs.

Except for problems caused by people’s own decisions, Democrats blame real corporations, not the rich, who are responsible for most people’s problems. E.g., Democrat politicians are to blame for poor public schools, dangerous neighborhoods, trapping people in poverty, breaking apart families, high taxes, high health care costs, and low incomes.

Most rich people only benefit, not harm, the rest of us. They prosper by providing products and services that people want more than their money.

Would anyone give up their computers, cell phones, cars, life-extending and extending health care, etc., to keep their creators/providers from getting rich? We want more things that enrich and extend our lives; that requires en- couraging, with profits, people to risk the money and effort to try to develop those things.

Rich people pay most of the taxes and they employ millions of people. They help us keep the economy going by buying new high-priced technol- ogy, determining demand, and stimu- lating the competition and production that drives down prices. Rich people’s donations fund things that benefit us every day: libraries, hospitals, col- leges, parks, medical research facilities, scholarships, museums, the arts, many charities, etc.

Democrats don’t define “fair share” because they need to always have a scapegoat. The top one percent paid 45.7 percent and the top 20 percent paid 84 percent of the federal personal taxes collected in 2014; it’s hard to un- understand how that is not paying their “fair share.” A person who earns his/her mon- ey honestly and follows our laws isn’t greedy or immoral just because he/she has a lot of money.

What is immoral is Democrat polit- icians lying to voters and blaming scapegoats for Democrat policies that keep people poor, break-up families, and force children into dangerous fail- ing schools. What is greedy is using politicians’ positions of public trust to reward (bribe/payoff) special interest supporters to satisfy the politicians’ greed for power, privilege, prestige, and wealth.

Don Elzing

Meredith, N.H.

Don: We publish this letter to serve as an example of just how bad the Stockholm Syndrome can get if left untreated.

If you don’t have a guardian ad litem you should get one, before the scam artists fleece you naked.

The Editor

= Give ’Em Hell, Donald

To the Editor: Hated by the Democrats and abandoned by his own party Don- ald Trump is the lone hero, a true profile in courage, that is not afraid to challenge the radical left, the neo- conservatives that have taken control of both parties, and those cowardly politicians who test the wind before declaring their loyalties, all of whom will remove and desecrate the symbols of America and its heroes. They have begun by removing the Confederate flag from the capital to remove the Confederate flag and the monuments to the war heroes who fought to preserve the concept of states rights in the face of a overpowering central government, and they will not stop until Mount Rushmore is defaced and Old Claye herself is destroyed. In short, they hate the United States, and their campaign is to destroy this great nation and its principle of non-intervention and of minding its own business in not seeking monsters to destroy when it comes to foreign wars, concepts the left wing interventionists deplore, in favor of globalization. Furthermore, the true racists are those on the left who target the white, Christian, heterosexu- al, European descendants, that stand in their way to adopting and accept the left’s degenerate lifestyles that reject the sanctity of human life, or any concept of traditional morality, and retrain on behavior.

What happened in Charlottesville, W.

Hate Mail, &c.

in page six
It is a tactic from the left's lofty, but hypocritical statements. It is a tactic from the left's true intentions, or some poorly educated undergraduate contaminated with the notion that the repossession of a state poorhouse, and both had been determined to be "imbeciles" by state doctors, but Carrie had borne an illegitimate child and was being subjected to involuntary sterilization. Holmes found the law constitutional, and in his opinion he added the editorial comment that "three generations of imbeciles are enough."

To be fair, Holmes's tolerance for eugenics came at a time when some of the most enlightened Americans showed interest in that means of improving society. Tens of thousands of women were reportedly sterilized as a result, and the movement here served as the specific example for the same program in Nazi Germany.

In Schenck, Holmes decreed that the First Amendment did not protect any speech that created "a clear and present danger," but he was inconsistent in requiring such a danger to silence speech. As many feared, that initial breach in the First Amendment only widened, and soon even Holmes allowed punishment of political speech that posed no danger at all. In 1919 he refused the appeal of former presidential candidate Eugene Debs, who had been imprisoned for publications that had been jails for helping some...
Will you enlist in “Trump’s War”? by Jim Hightower

President Trump might have dodged military service in his youth, but he certainly is militaristic—he is bellicose, likes to issue commands, and is constantly firing off militant tweets at anyone he perceives to be an enemy (which seems to include everyone who dares to disagree with him).

Meanwhile, he and his White-House-full-of-military-commanders are pondering the launch of a real shooting war, a military offensive that would be known as “Trump’s War.” Actually, he would be attempting to achieve battlefield glory by picking up and extending what at first was Bush’s War, then Obama’s War. The place is Afghanistan, and the strategy is to shove another 5,000 or so American soldiers (none of whom will be named Trump) into that bottomless hole.

Yes, that mess is still boiling, despite President Obama’s 2012 pledge to end US involvement. After 16 years (the longest war in our history), after more than 2,000 Americans killed and 20,000 others maimed, after more than $800 billion spent — it is — 8,400 of our troops are still there, the killing continues, and we taxpayers keep pumping $3 billion a month into the insanity. For all of that, the Taliban forces we’ve been trying to defeat are stronger than ever, and the Afghan government we’re supporting is as corrupt as ever, and despised as ever.

Nonetheless, Trump is violating a basic rule of civilian control of the military: Never ask the generals if they need more resources. This president has surrounded himself with generals and surrendered crucial decision-making authority to them.

We weren’t able to win in Afghanistan when 100,000 of our troops were there — so what do we win by putting 5,000 more soldiers in war zones other than more U.S. casualties? If Trump can’t tell us that, we should tell him “NO!”

Admiral Fowl's Piscataqua River Guide (Not for Navigation Purposes)

1800—Lausanne-born Térode Louis Jean-Marie Deluc, who first turned down the offer of the Swiss Confederation to be its first steamboat captain, sets sail as master of the Batavia under the command of the British merchant Seaborn.

1905—The 10th anniversary of the death of the British admiral Sir Edward Codrington, who died in 1886.

1919—U.S. Army soldiers stop the Zouave War in Egypt and push the Ottoman forces back to the Euphrates River.

1948—Administration has secret proof Iraq

2003—A bomb in a horse-drawn vehicle kills 13 in New York City. The bomb was set off by a man who had plunged a car into the East River.

Sunday, September 10

2008—Lorenzo Berns opens up the first of six local hotels.

2010—Doors of Discovery launches with a free, guided walking tour in Ballston Spa, N.Y.


Monday, September 11

1875—Congressman Charles Sumner of Massachusetts of the American Party is shot by an African American slave in his Washington, D.C., hotel room.

1949—Vladimir Lenin, the founder of the Soviet Union, dies.

1994—An H-bomb factory on the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C., explodes, engulfing 2,125,000 tanker trucks—up to head the town council of Anene-

2007—Merrill Lynch and Lehman Brothers stock prices collapse, signaling the start of the Great Recession.

Tuesday, September 12


2015—President Barack Obama is nominated for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize by the Process for Peace in the Middle East with a special focus on Palestine.

2016—Donald Trump wins the Republican nomination for President of the United States.

Wednesday, September 13

2009—U.S. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus announces that the USS Kitty Hawk will be decommissioned in 2011.

2017—President Donald Trump signs an executive order suspending the refugee program.

Thursday, September 14


Friday, September 15

2003—A bomb in a horse-drawn vehicle kills 13 in New York City. The bomb was set off by a man who had plunged a car into the East River.

Saturday, September 16


2027—President Donald Trump signs the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025.

2029—President Donald Trump signs the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2027.