

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Putting our best foot forward is right way

It is a delight to walk or drive around Vernonia lately and see the new paint on several commercial buildings, the hanging flower pots, the flower-filled barrels and window boxes and, especially, the show-piece bridge over Rock Creek. Improvements are not limited to downtown, either. Many formerly run-down residences have been fixed up with new foundations, paint and landscaping.

Some of the credit goes to individuals who want their property to look as good as possible. Even more credit belongs to the group called Vernonia Pride. You have, indeed, awakened people to what a wonderful community this is if they are willing to put in just a little effort, not only on their own behalf, but also for others who are unable to take care of their own properties. Pride shows.

Thanks were right, one more is needed

A Letter to the Editor from Barb Ervin (page three) thanks many people for helping keep the HOSTS math program alive at Washington Grade School after federal funding was reduced. We agree, the community has responded positively to support an important remedial math program. But one big thanks is missing.

It was Barb Ervin, a classroom aide at WGS, who called attention to the loss of the program and who came to the community to raise funds in order to retain it. Because of her caring and concern, some children will not live their lives hampered by an inadequate grasp of a basic subject.

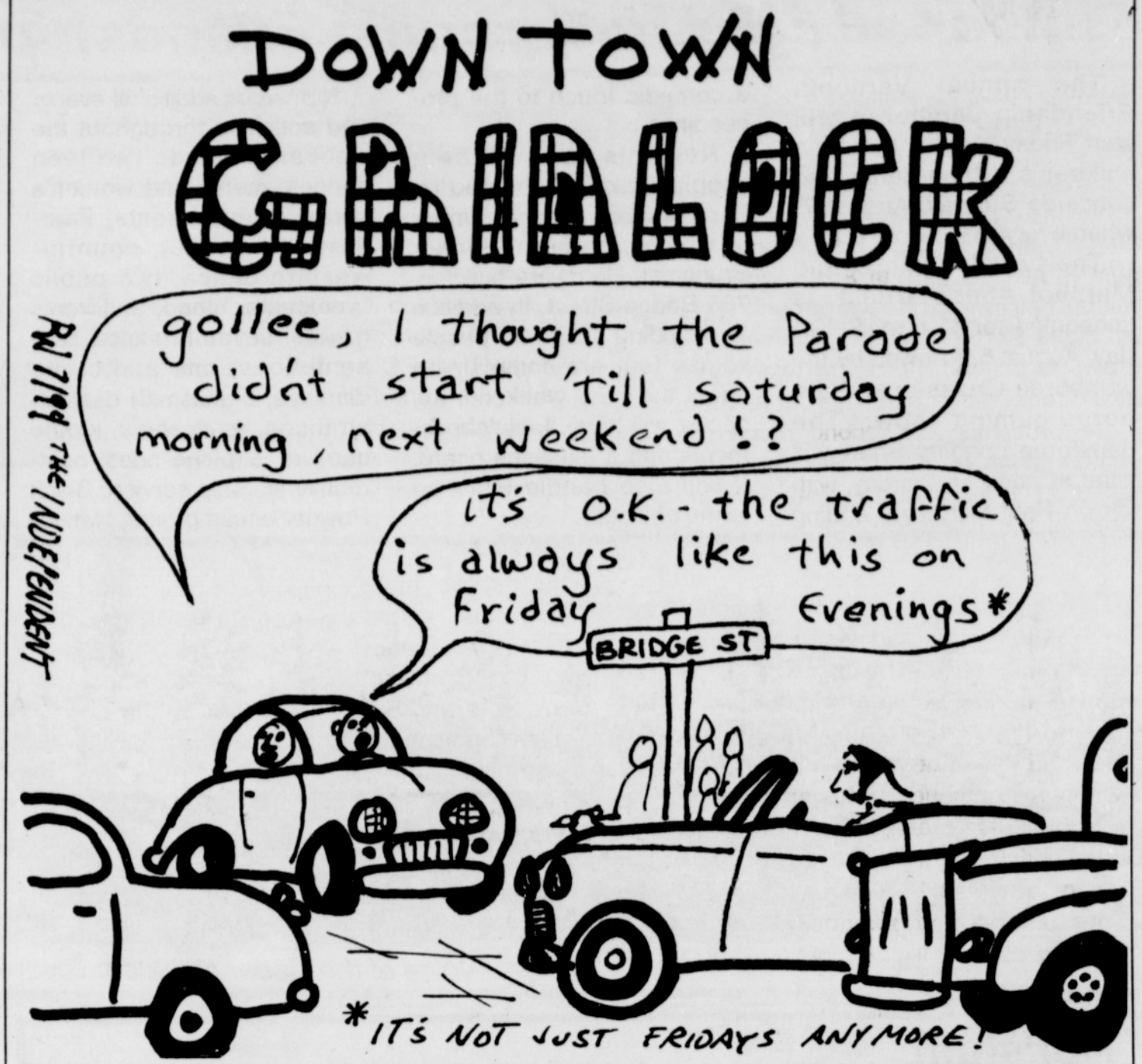
Thank you, Barb; you have shown how one person can make a difference.

Injury suit may cost taxpayers extra \$\$\$

If the City of Vernonia is required to pay \$45,000 because someone was injured after tripping on an uneven sidewalk (see story on page 5), it follows that the City must require all property owners to bring their sidewalks up to code. A lot of people will be unhappy about that, but how many judgements can the taxpayers support if the city doesn't enforce its ordinances?

Even some sidewalks that are in reasonable condition, but are slightly higher or lower than adjoining sidewalks, may have to be replaced, because that was the situation where the accident happened.

The irony of this particular lawsuit is that John Lentz, the husband of the woman who filed the lawsuit, was building inspector for the city for a long time, when city ordinances were considered a joke and state codes were ignored. Does anyone still long for the "good old days?"



Health Update

This information has been provided by the Vernonia Fire Department Emergency Medical Service.

Working or playing in a hot environment—both indoors and out—exposes people to serious safety and health hazards.

Workers in jobs such as construction, electric, gas or telephone utilities, logging and other physically stressful work, are exposed to heat-related health disorders. This is especially true for workers who must use semi-permeable or impermeable personal protective equipment such as hard hats, special clothing or rubber gloves and sleeves. Students wearing helmets and pads for summer football practice are also at risk.

Over-heated workers are not mentally alert and can make mistakes that jeopardize not only their own safety, but also the safety of their fellow workers.

Four factors affect the amount of heat stress that a person faces—temperature, humidity, radiant heat (such as from the sun or a furnace) and air velocity. Perhaps most important to the level of stress is personal characteristics such as age, weight, fitness, medical condition and acclimatization to the heat.

The body reacts to high external temperature by circulating blood to the skin, which increases skin temperature and allows the body to eliminate excess heat through the skin. Sweating is another means the body uses to maintain a stable internal body temperature. Sweating is effective only when the humidity level is low enough to permit evaporation and if the fluids and salts lost are adequately replaced. "Salts" as used in this article does not refer to sodium (table salt), but to potassium, calcium and magnesium salts.

If the body cannot dispose of excess heat, it will store it. When this happens, the body's core temperature rises and the heart rate increases. As the body continues to store heat, the individual begins to lose concentration and has difficulty focusing on the work being performed. The first symptoms of heat stress are discomfort, fatigue, dizziness and the inability to concentrate. Any of these symptoms can lead to impaired performance and increased risk of accidents. Heat stress can lead to five different types of heat-related illnesses.

• Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related

problem because, if not treated promptly and properly, it can be fatal. Heat stroke is caused when the body's internal mechanism fails to regulate its core temperature, sweating stops and the body can no longer rid itself of excess heat. Signs of heat stroke include: (1) Confusion, delirium, loss of consciousness, convulsions or coma; (2) a body temperature of 106 degrees or higher; (3) hot, dry skin which may be red, mottled, or bluish. Unless first aid is administered, death or injury to the brain or other vital organs may occur. While awaiting medical help, move the victim to a cool area and soak his or her clothing with cool water while fanning vigorously to increase cooling.

• Heat exhaustion results from fluid loss due to sweating when a person has failed to drink enough fluids, take in enough salt or both. A person with heat exhaustion still sweats, but experiences extreme weakness or fatigue, giddiness, nausea and/or headache. The victim has a moist, clammy skin, a pale or flushed complexion, and a body temperature that is normal or slightly higher. Some may also have a rapid pulse and low blood pressure. Treatment is usually simple: The victim should rest in a cool place and drink plenty of water or other fluids such as an electrolyte solution (a drink used by athletes to quickly restore potassium, calcium, and magnesium salts). Severe cases involving victims who vomit or lose consciousness may require longer treatment under medical supervision.

• Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms caused by the loss of fluid and body salts from sweating. Tired muscles are usually most susceptible to cramps. Cramps may occur during or after activity. They can be eased with massage, but maintaining proper chemical (fluids/salts) balance in the body will eliminate them in most people.

• Fainting (heat syncope) may be a problem if a person is not acclimatized to heat and simply stands still in the heat. Victims usually recover quickly after a brief period of lying down. Moving around, rather than standing still, will usually reduce the possibility of fainting.

• Heat rash, also known as prickly heat, may occur in hot and humid environments

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