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# The Forgotten War

If you visit the Sacred Heart Cemetery in Freeport, you will likely experience the familiar, peaceful feeling that permeates cemeteries everywhere. This was true Tuesday morning. It was quiet there, except for the birds singing and the dull hum of traffic on I-94 not far away. Light filtered through the trees and onto tombstones, dappling their appearance into a mixture of sun and shade, of soft whites, grays, brown and black.

My mission was to find the tombstone of Eleanor Clara Beste. It took a while, but I located it in Row L. Her brown granite tombstone features bronze lettering on a black plate. It reads: ELEANOR C BESTE, ENS US NAVY, FEB 20 1925 † SEP 19 1950.

That day in 1950, Eleanor was on a flight to Tokyo to work as a member of the Navy Nurse Corps, tending the casualties of the Korean War. In the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean, the plane she was on crashed in the Marshall Islands, 2,300 miles from her destination.

Eleanor died as a soldier in the Korean War, dubbed as "The Forgotten War" because it receives so little attention for one reason or another. It should receive more. From its beginning in 1950 until the cease-fire of 1953, 95,000 Minnesotans served in the war; 700 were killed in combat; 151 were missing in action. These are stunning numbers by any standards, but while numbers tell a lot, names tell more.

Going through a website called honorstates.org, I was able to refine a search to Stearns County, where we have so many connections, and view a list of our area's fallen heroes lost in the Korean War. In honor of Memorial Day, I feel they deserve a mention:

- Eleanor Clara Beste, Sept. 19, 1950, Navy
- Sylvester Arthur Braun, Feb. 14, 1951, Army
- Eldon Rex Buchan, May 25, 1951, Army
- Donald Richard Fahrenholz, March 19, 1953, Marines
- Kenneth Gervase Hoeschen, Aug. 8, 1952, Navy
- Raymond Andrew Holthaus, Sept. 28, 1952, Marines
- Ervin R. Jarmusek, Oct. 14, 1952, Army
- Lyle E. Johnson, Feb. 8, 1951, Army
- Richard L. Luke, Dec. 1, 1951, Army
- Richard Joseph Meinz, July 26, 1952, Marines
- Eugene F. Mohs, July 26, 1953, Marines



**Random Reflections**  
by Diane Leukam

Arnold J. Ostendorf, Oct. 5, 1951, Army  
Laurel E. Parks, July 27, 1950, Army  
John Lavigne Perkins, May 28, 1952, Marines  
Francis J. Reimer, Dec. 12, 1950, Army  
Eugene Harold Roering, July 7, 1952, Marines  
Elmer H. Sand, July 26, 1951, Army  
Howard R. Skaalerud, July 12, 1950, Army  
Albert V. Wiswell, Sept. 3, 1950, Army

Many of these last names are familiar here in Sauk Centre, and some of these people listed above may actually be from our community. There was limited information available, and many of you know much more on a personal level. One name, Laurel E. Parks,

prompted me to call Judy Zenzen, a friend and former neighbor. I had to ask – and should have known – if he was a relative of hers. "He's my brother," she said. Indeed. Please read the feature story that ensued, which you will find on the front page of this paper. Even though there are not a lot of details of Larry's service to his country, in the story there is something we often forget when we spew statistics and death dates about war: He is her brother.

For every statistic, there are the personal stories of childhood memories, relationships and loss of life in service to one's country. The willingness to serve and even give up one's life for the liberties we all hold dear is incredible.

That's what Memorial Day is all about. I hope we can take some time to reflect on this over the next few days. Unfortunately, for many, Memorial Day is just a long weekend.

Back to Eleanor. She was the daughter of Henry F. Beste and Regina G. (Haselkamp) Beste and one of nine siblings in her family. Like every lost soldier, she has a story that is woven amongst unrealized dreams and ambitions, surrendered willingly for you and me.

In the quiet of the Sacred Heart Cemetery rests the tombstone of 24-year-old Eleanor Clara Beste, a casualty of the Forgotten War. She may be there in spirit, but her remains were never recovered. On the Marshall Islands, 6,000 miles away in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, there is a whisper of her passing, on Sept. 19, 1950.

May her soul rest in peace.

# The Shelby paradox

Three and a half hours, Margaret Shelby. I was stationed in the school's auditorium for three and a half hours, covering the theatrical event held in your honor. I was more than happy to be there, though; you deserved every minute of it.



**Ultra Sonnek**  
by Ben Sonnek

For those of you who skipped the front-page feature in this week's Herald, I'm talking about "The Margaret Show: Ms. Shelby's Grand Finale," the celebration of Margaret's 37-year career as Sauk Centre High School's theatre director and speech coach. There were songs, dances, speeches, awards, commemorations and more than a few people getting choked up onstage and offstage. To crown it all, you now are the focus of a local holiday – May 21, Margaret Shelby Day – and the auditorium itself is slated to be renamed the Margaret Shelby Theatre.

And, like I said, the whole thing took over three and a half hours. I hadn't eaten dinner yet, and I therefore hope it's understandable why I departed the event without staying for the reception. I had all the photos I needed and then some. I didn't need to get any quotes from Margaret, for her speech had that covered. I didn't need to tell her what a fortunate, blessed individual she is, for she seemed to have a grasp of that reality already.

However, there remained something yet unsaid, and that's why I'm writing this column.

In all of the evening's speeches from alumni, sponsors and community members, I caught a general tenor that Margaret Shelby is the type of person anyone should aspire to be. That's rather true, of course, but at the same time, it's also kind of not. To paraphrase G.K. Chesterton, there are only four or five things people must know, and all of them are paradoxes; for instance, someone finds pleasure more by seeking it less, or the person who best avoids death is the one who doesn't have that much aversion to it. In Margaret's case, it seems another paradox comes into play: The one who wants to become a public luminary like Margaret is the one who does not try to be Margaret.

Now, the reason Margaret might say one shouldn't aspire to be like her is because, if you succeed, your peers will put on a show that's over three hours long and is simultaneously flattering and embarrassing. That's part of it, sure, but the reason I believe one shouldn't try to be like Margaret comes from, ironically enough, Margaret's own example. From what I can tell, she didn't become a high school theatre director and speech coach for the accolades. If anything, she put her time into making sure other people got their own accolades. The person who least expected "The Margaret Show" was Margaret herself.

Perhaps herein lies the trick to Ms. Shelby's paradox. We shouldn't aim to become Margaret Shelby, Sauk Centre figure of prominence. We should, though, try to be Margaret Shelby, the woman who got a job and did it to the best of her ability, forgetting herself in the process. In an age where we're told to self-reflect to the point of thinly veiled narcissism, that's an example that needs to be spread to communities beyond Sauk Centre.

# Becoming who we are

We live at the porch steps of history – a bold claim for a small, quiet town that tends to mind its own business. As summer arrives, the Sinclair Lewis home, after COVID and reconstruction, will once again be open to the public. From sheerly an architectural viewpoint, the home is a gem and worth the price of admission. The stories told of Lewis' youth and early marriage are winsome and kind, although he wasn't particularly either. We know our supposed hometown boy did not have any love for his hometown, although he may have come around in his later years.

Tourists will once again come through our town. I think we have a great Main Street. Some tourists travel way off the beaten path just to be here. Own town has been featured in Time and Life magazines as well as many other papers over the decades. The articles tend to focus on how provincial we are, that Sinclair Lewis had it right, that our town is comfortable living in the past, being insular and living off the recirculation of gossip. But here's the rub: We are not the town which Lewis derided in his book Main Street but are a clever replacement. And that is a story which historians are just beginning to tell.

Local county histories were written at the end of the 19th century. They enshrine the story of how virtuous Yankee families – like the Palmers, the Lewises and Dubois, among so many others – conquered the wilderness, helped rescue the Union and created a productive, enterprising American character. They started the Gradatim Society, The Bryant library and chapters of Masons and Odd Fellow societies. For a brief moment, the Midwest was the Chicago of its time, but that moment quickly passed. Writers in the new century fled not just to Chicago but to New York, Los Angeles and Paris. Sauk Centre, Sinclair Lewis' s Gopher Prairie, came to represent



**Main Street Matters**  
by Jill Abahsain

all the small-town ills from which a new generation of authors, along with the progressive monied class, fled.

And, as the original Yankee settlers decamped, a new group came to settle, and that would be the latest wave of immigrants, which in our area were German Catholics. They bought and built more Yankee-styled houses. They bought and expanded local business. They successfully raised up a new generation replicated on the Yankee model, the same model that Lewis had criticized and left behind in his dust.

So, as tourists come through town and watch us on Main Street from a table at the Palmer House after a tour through the Boyhood Home, they think they see the latest generation of characters from the book of the same name. But they don't. Under the veneer of a Yankee-inspired civility lies the diverse and fiercely independent ideals of our immigrant ancestors. I happen to think, and sometimes tell visiting tourists, that, by appearing to be one thing – provincial Yankees – while actually being another – independent minded immigrants – we may underpin some of the so-called culture wars waged in the media these days.

I think I see a way out of those wars: Be authentic. If our immigrant relatives adopted an inauthentic lifestyle, it was done for good reasons, which was to be accepted and prosper. And they did, so much so that we can now feel comfortable creating our own authentic town made up of hundreds of wonderful individualistic and imaginative people. We can and are actually in the process of breaking through that veneer and are on the way to becoming a Sauk Centre that Lewis never imagined. That's exciting. And that is how America grows and remains great.

# Storm damage, rentals and fiber networks

Well, school is almost out for the summer, the state legislature is adjourned and my garden is too wet to plant, but I'm also one of the lucky ones who didn't have much storm or water damage. To all of us, these mean different things. The same holds true for the farmers who are struggling to plant their crops and the lakeshore owners whose docks and lifts are still partially submerged from the deluge of rain these past couple of weeks. No matter what events have affected each of our lives, we must remember there is always someone who has it worse than we do. The same can be said at the county level.

Besides the regular ongoing issues that a county commissioner as well as county staff deals with, the excess rain and wind have caused more issues relevant to field erosion, lake shore erosion and drainage ditch issues. As I stated before, we sometimes think we have it worse until someone else calls with their story that can make ours appear insignificant. A good example is I lost probably a dozen trees during the May 12 storm, but then I got a call from an individual by Sauk Centre who is dealing with water not only in the house but throughout their yard due to ditch drainage issues, or a farmer by Albany whose driveway was impassable due to



**Commissioner's Corner**  
by Steve Notch

the large amount of water overwhelming the county ditch system and making it so the milk truck could not get in to pick up his milk. Everyone has a story to tell, and we should never discount someone's story as insignificant.

The short-term vacation rentals have been an ongoing issue not only for the county but the townships that have lakes and now are trying to figure out how to handle these requests. The county can still take the applications, and they can still get approved or denied at the County level, but if a township has a moratorium on vacation rentals, a lodging permit will not be granted by the county to allow an approved permit to be activated until the township has decided if or what a short-term vacation rental ordinance will be. These short-term rental properties have probably existed for years, but now that more property owners are using VRBO or Airbnb to advertise and renters are coming from anywhere in the world, permanent residents are more concerned with who is in their neighborhood on a weekly basis. Again, I think there is a place for these types of rentals, but it's a matter of finding the right balance to make both sides of the issue content with the outcome. Hopefully, the townships as well as the county can get

creative and find a common ground both sides can live with.

Lastly, the County Administrator Mike Williams has been diligently working with internet service providers to partner with the county and townships to expand their fiber-to-the-home networks. The County has allocated \$16 million of the federal American Rescue Plan monies they have received to this effort, and Mr. Williams has been reaching out to the townships and small cities to request they contribute part of their federal dollars as well to try and get as many of the County residents' access to fiber-to-the-home. To date, a good share of the townships signed resolutions contributing a portion of their federal dollars to help unserved or underserved residents.

If there are townships in Stearns County that are still unsure of what to do, feel free to contact myself at (320) 836-2199 or Williams at (320) 656-3969, and we can attend your next meeting to explain why the county feels getting fiber-to-the-home is a priority. Anyone who has had children trying to do their schooling remotely without good internet access knows how tough it is. Also, as more and more farmers and rural businesses adopt greater technology, the need will only be greater.

Thank you, and feel free to reach out to me at [steve.notch@co.stearns.mn.us](mailto:steve.notch@co.stearns.mn.us) or (320) 836-2199.

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