

~Political Special~

The general consensus is it was our interview with Broome County Executive-candidate Tarik Abdelazim that single-handedly cost him the election. We don't see it. Raising the question of whether he is a terrorist seems like perfectly legitimate journalistic due diligence to us. The same goes for getting to the bottom of whether Debbie Preston, the person who beat Abdelazim, is getting treatment for kleptomania. And whether Binghamton-mayor candidates Douglas Walter Drazen is a werewolf, Teri Renna was born a man, Rich David is a made—or just connected—member of organized crime, and Ed Hickey is, well... Ed Hickey.

In pursuit of these answers, and more, we've unleashed everyone's favorite Police Gazette columnist Paul Juser into the local political landscape. What he has found is nothing if not revealing. This month we present the first in his series on the race for the...

Mayor

of The City from Another Universe by Paul Juser The Strength To Do the Right Thing



"My name is Ed Hickey and I'm running for mayor." The script was well practiced, but still he stumbled occasionally and repeated himself. "My father's been in the bar and restaurant business all my life, and I'm a businessman." Sometimes there are variations. If the listener has a whiskey nose, Ed talks about his own problems with alcohol and the car accident that nearly ended his life.

We were walking through a rich section of the South Side near the Vestal border. Ed focused his talk on taxes, not on blight, as has been his chief subject on TV and radio recently. There is no sidewalk in this part of town, so we walked down the middle of the street dodging cars that barely slowed. The struggles of Hickey's past life only got the briefest mention here. "A few months ago I quit drinking, and I realized we are the most taxed city in the most taxed county in the most taxed state in the nation, and we can't afford to pave our roads." Sometimes he tacks on, "...without Obama money." Hickey is a Republican, after all. "Something has gone horribly wrong."

Ed Hickey manages the Belmar, Binghamton's preeminent cultural hub, where the Party Mayor heads when Tranquil is too pretentious and the Lost Dog is already closed. Anyone who's everyone has closed the Belmar more times than they will admit or can remember. Any night you can see live music, grad students discussing philosophy, two Irish dudes dressed in tattoos beating the hell out of each other, a poetry reading in the back room, or four guys exiting the women's bathroom rubbing their noses.

A few people knew Ed from his television appearances, or knew his family. This side of town was not Belmar crowd. If the person made no motion to extricate from the conversation and shut the door, Ed would continue. "When I decided to throw my hat in the ring, I called the powers that be in the Republican party, and they said they weren't interested. They'd already picked their candidate." Ed spends four to five hours each night going door to door introduc-

ing himself, gathering signatures for his petition. He has enough already, but wants double the number, knowing each will be contested by supporters of the Republican frontrunner, Rich David.

I spoke with David at Flashbacks, the 70's nostalgia bar he owns on State Street on the opposite end of the block from City Hall. David says he too has campaigned door to door, except Father's Day, which he spent with his father. He'd already been through the neighborhood I visited with Ed Hickey. Most Republicans apologized and said they'd signed for David, but none could remember his name beyond "That other guy." David doesn't think he's gaining anonymity as simply "the Republican candidate." He defends, "I certainly can't sit here and say every person is aware of Rich David, who he is, what he wants to do." They recognize his face.

David served as deputy mayor under Richard Bucci and has been serving as a seat-warmer at BCC, until he took a leave of absence for his campaign. This is the third mayoral race with a heavily divided Republican base. Douglas Walter Drazen, an independent, won the most Republican votes in 2005, and many considered Drazen a spoiler against David in his 2009 attempt to dethrone the Party Mayor. Drazen announced his entrance to this race June 25th. But in an exclusive *Police Gazette* interview Drazen said he will not continue through to the election if he does not win the Republican nomination, though he promised to make the next four years interesting. "The political parties shouldn't be picking the candidates," Ed says; "the people should be picking the candidates." And this gets at least a smile from each person he spoke to. There has been no Republican primary since 1977.

Hickey announced his campaign April 16th at the American Legion, Post 80. He was surrounded by his wife and children, and was introduced by York frontman Jimmy John McCabe. News cameras jostled for position, and Ed gave a few interviews before he took the stage. Non-media in attendance were largely Belmar supporters. He told about his history in Binghamton, and was candid about his mistakes. He flipped his car on Route 81 south of Syracuse at 2am in 2002 and was assumed to be dead by everyone on the scene until the ambulances arrived. For the next few years, he lived like there was no tomorrow. He "ate too much, drank too much, and laughed too much." His moment of clarity came while visiting colleges with his oldest son. He knew his current lifestyle would not let him do the same for his new toddler. Hickey has been stone sober for several months, lost more than 100 pounds, and has taken a leave of absence from the Belmar to focus on his campaign. "If the Democrats pick their candidate, and the Republicans pick their candidate, both sides will continue picking our pockets."

Typically, Ed finishes with, "I'm starting my own party, the Eagle Party." Hickey's own political leanings may be to the right, but he is proud of his strong friendship with Mayor Ryan. Ed stood up at the Party Mayor's wedding, and Ryan has enjoyed Thanksgiving at the Hickey household. "You have the right wing of the eagle and the left wing of the eagle, and they need to start working together instead of against each other." Ed would turn the city around with monthly festivals and the return of the Yegatta Regatta, a drunken flotilla of homemade rafts that once floated down the Chenango River to be bombarded with water balloons and more booze from the bridges. As recounted in the forums of www.cavediver.net, "The whole thing fell apart when some ditz sued the City because her drunk & stoned husband drowned after walking off the raft he was on." Ed's renewed Yegatta Regatta

would not have kegs on boats, and it would have life preservers. It would be done responsibly. Ed looked into previous insurance policies, which were outrageous; so hurtles remain.

Ed says this is his one shot at politics. If he's not elected, he will return to the business world. He's taking the fight one day at a time, but promises he's in for the long run. A Republican primary in September is almost guaranteed. But Ed plans to fight on even if he doesn't secure the nomination. During his canvass all but a few people were supportive, and Ed received signatures from all that had not already committed. "This doesn't mean you have to vote for me," Ed explains. "It just says you think I should be allowed to run." Ed thanked everyone who listened and closed with, "Remember me in September!"

July Fest Becomes Cool Not Your Father's July Fest Anymore

July Fest at the Rivertrail will take place July 12th, 13th, and 14th at the MLK Jr. Promenade directly adjacent to the Court St. Bridge in downtown Binghamton. This is an expansion of the over 50-year tradition of July Fest, which for the first time in its history will incorporate the local sustainability movement in addition to three days of diverse music, live art, food and local culture. The event will focus on health, nutrition, community interaction, social justice, sustainable economies, and environmental stewardship.

July Fest at the Rivertrail will highlight the vibrant and growing independent music and arts in Greater Binghamton combined with talent from afar; make a positive impact on the City of Binghamton; provide a platform for various businesses and community organizations to market their brand, product, and services, as well as to educate the public; and provide community networking to build a strong, sustainable local economy.

The *Police Gazette* is a sponsor, so look for us there!

Summer Savoyards Present Mainstage Production This Month

The Summer Savoyards, Inc., have been putting on professional-quality Gilbert & Sullivan operettas in the Binghamton region for over 50 years. Such legendary shows as *The Pirates of Penzance*, *HMS Pinafore*, and *The Mikado* have graced the stages of The Forum and Anderson Center. (See the *Police Gazette* cover illustrating the "craze" caused by *The Mikado's* 1885 New York opening on page 4.) This year, the Savoyards are mounting Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* at the Anderson Center's Chamber Hall July 12th and 13th at 8:00pm and July 14th at 3:00pm. The Friday performance includes a "Venetian Carnival," in which audience members who show up in their "best Carnival gear" will save \$6 off the regular ticket price.

The Savoyards' mission from the beginning has been to provide a learning experience for members in all facets of musical production—performance, choral and orchestral experience, set and costume building, make-up, graphic design, marketing, and public relations. Over 2,000 individuals have been active members since 1961. The Savoyards' annual General Meeting and Election will be held in the backstage area of the Anderson Center following the July 14th performance. All Savoyards, past and present, are welcome to come and participate. Ticket prices for all performances are \$18 regular and \$15 for students and senior citizens.