

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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Yankton Media, Inc., 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078

CONTACT US

PHONE:
(605) 665-7811
(800) 743-2968
NEWS FAX:
(605) 665-1721
ADVERTISING FAX:
(605) 665-0288
WEBSITE:
www.yankton.net
EMAIL ADDRESS:
news@yankton.net

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Detroit's Fall Serves As Lesson

The economic fall of Detroit, which last week became the largest city ever to declare bankruptcy, is the result of a perfect storm of bad debts, bad government and bad management. Thus, the city has ended up precisely where it deserves to be. Such is the price that is paid when you have \$18 billion in accrued financial obligations, a shrinking tax base and, through it all, a greater desire to watch your own back and blame others than to bluntly address the issue.

In a sense, the bankruptcy filing may be the only way this once vibrant city can get its affairs in order. It is the last resort.

Detroit has long been a showcase for urban decline. It once boasted a population of 1.8 million residents in the mid-20th century, but that number has been reduced to about 700,000, with most of the decline coming in the last 40 years. With residents hemorrhaging to the suburbs or elsewhere, parts of the city have become ghostly and empty. In its bankruptcy filing last week, the City of Detroit itself listed 78,000 abandoned buildings that are awaiting demolition.

But Detroit's troubles go far beyond changing times and dwindling urban areas.

The city has been dominated for years by overly powerful labor unions and incompetent government officials. As Douglas A. McIntyre, an online financial news editor and suburban Detroit resident, wrote in USA Today last Friday, "Detroit earned its bankruptcy the easy way — through greed, the desire for political power and poor planning."

He noted that a deal was proposed recently by Kevyn D. Orr, Detroit's emergency manager, in which the municipal employees would take cuts to their pensions and "share the pain" of restructuring the city's financial obligations with municipal bond holders. But the employees refused, leaving both the unions and the bond holders to blame each other for the city's financial straits while the ship sunk in a swirling ocean of red ink.

Bad political leadership has also been to blame, as public officials, refusing to recognize the very obvious decline, kept planning and spending as if all was well. And they offered their tributes to the unions and the bond holders — fiddling while their Rome slowly burned. In the process, Detroit did not aggressively try to reinvent itself as the auto industry faded and then exited the Motor City stage. By many accounts, the city lurched forward without a vision of what it was to become. And it spent a lot of money spinning its wheels in the process.

And now the city has reaped what it has sown. There now is approximately one creditor for every seven residents left in the city.

Detroit is a lair of ruin. Public services have been cut and public confidence is shaken. And no one knows where all this goes from here.

What happens to the city next — both in the courts and on the streets — is up to others. Detroit has lost its leverage. It should serve as a stark lesson to other governing entities unwilling to confront their own changing realities and to hammer out the deals needed to achieve a common goal for the greater good. Detroit's demise shows just how bad bad can truly get.

kmh

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, July 23, the 204th day of 2013. There are 161 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On July 23, 1983, an Air Canada Boeing 767 ran out of fuel while flying from Montreal to Edmonton; the pilots were able to glide the jetliner to a safe emergency landing in Gimli, Manitoba. The near-disaster occurred because the fuel had been erroneously measured in pounds instead of kilograms at a time when Canada was converting to the metric system.

On this date: In 1885, Ulysses S. Grant, the 18th president of the United States, died in Mount McGregor, N.Y., at age 63.

In 1886, a legend was born as Steve Brodie claimed to have made a daredevil plunge from the Brooklyn Bridge into New York's East River. However, there are doubts about whether the dive actually took place.

In 1888, author Raymond Chandler was born in Chicago.

In 1914, Austria-Hungary issued a list of demands to Serbia following the killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serb assassin; the dispute led to World War I.

In 1945, French Marshal Henri Petain, who had headed the Vichy government during World War II, went on trial, charged with treason. He was convicted and condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted.

In 1951, Petain died in prison.

In 1952, Egyptian military officers led by Gamal Abdel Nasser launched a successful coup against King Farouk I.

In 1967, a week of deadly race-related rioting that claimed 43 lives erupted in Detroit.

In 1977, a jury in Washington, D.C., convicted 12 Hanafi Muslims of charges stemming from the hostage siege at three buildings the previous March.

In 1986, Britain's Prince Andrew married Sarah Ferguson at Westminster Abbey in London. The couple divorced in 1996.

In 1997, the search for Andrew Cunanan, the suspected killer of designer Gianni Versace and others, ended as police found his body on a houseboat in Miami Beach, an apparent suicide.

In 2011, singer Amy Winehouse, 27, was found dead in her London home from accidental alcohol poisoning.

Ten years ago: A new audiotape purported to be from toppled dictator Saddam Hussein called on Iraqis to resist the U.S. occupation. Massachusetts' attorney general issued a report saying clergy members and others in the Boston Archdiocese probably had sexually abused more than 1,000 people over a period of six decades. New York City Councilman James Davis was shot to death by political rival Othiel Askew at City Hall; a police officer shot and killed Askew.

Five years ago: Hurricane Dolly slammed into the South Texas coast with punishing rain and winds of 100 mph. Democratic presidential contender Barack Obama toured Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, laying a wreath in memory of the 6 million Jews who died. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met North Korea's top diplomat, Pak Ui Chun, in Singapore, ending a four-year hiatus in cabinet-level contacts between the two countries.

One year ago: His hair dyed a shocking comic-book shade of orange-red, James Holmes, the former doctoral student accused of killing 12 moviegoers at a showing of the new Batman movie in Aurora, Colo., appeared in court for the first time. Penn State's football program was all but leveled by penalties for its handling of the allegations against former assistant coach Jerry Sandusky as the NCAA imposed an unprecedented \$60 million fine, a four-year ban from postseason play and a cut in the number of football scholarships it could award. Sally Ride, 61, the first American woman in space, died in La Jolla, Calif. Oscar-winning screenwriter Frank Pierson ("Dog Day Afternoon"; "Cool Hand Luke") died in Los Angeles at age 87.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Gloria DeHaven is 88. Concert pianist Leon Fleisher is 85. Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy is 77. Actor Ronny Cox is 75. Radio personality Don Imus is 73. Country singer Tony Joe White is 70. Rock singer David Essex is 66. Actor Larry Manetti is 66. Singer-songwriter John Hall is 65. Actress Belinda Montgomery is 63. Rock musician Blair Thornton (Bachman Turner Overdrive) is 63. Actress Edie McClurg is 62. Actress-writer Lydia Cornell is 60. Actor Woody Harrelson is 52. Rock musician Martin Gore (Depeche Mode) is 52. Actor Eriq La Salle is 51. Rock musician Yuval Gabay is 50. Rock musician Slash is 48. Actor Philip Seymour Hoffman is 46. Rock musician Nick Menza is 45. Model-actress Stephanie Seymour is 45. Actress Charisma Carpenter is 43. Rhythm-and-blues singer Sam Waters is 43. Country singer Alison Krauss is 42. Rhythm-and-blues singer Dalvin DeGrate is 42. Rock musician Chad Gracey (Live) is 42. Actor-comedian Marlon Wayans is 41. Country singer Shannon Brown is 40. Actress Kathryn Hahn is 40. Retired MLB All-Star Nomar Garciaparra is 40. Former White House intern Monica Lewinsky is 40. Actress Stephanie March is 39. Country musician David Pichette (Emerson Drive) is 36. Rhythm-and-blues singer Michelle Williams is 33. Actor Paul Wesley is 31. Actor Daniel Radcliffe is 24. Country musician Neil Perry is 23.

Thought for Today: "The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud." — Coco Chanel, French fashion designer (1883-1971).

FROM THE BIBLE

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost. 1 Timothy 1:15. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Rez of the Story

Some Greenwood Memories

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives),

The late John F. Kennedy once said: "We would like to live as we once lived, but history will not permit it." And so it is with many Native people. Kennedy may have been right about history's role in preventing a return to what was, but history cannot prevent one from remembering and telling about what was once reality.

Of late, I have noticed a resurgence of activity in what was once the seat of political power and educational opportunity for members of the Yankton Sioux Tribe. The old Tribal Hall was located there as was a BIAS school at one time. There was an annual wachipi (pow-wow) held there at the pow-wow grounds just south and a little west from the Struck By The Ree monument on top of the hill over looking Greenwood community.

Immediately adjacent to the pow-ground was once the Tribe's community housing project that everyone just called Greenwood Housing. I remember one particular year toward the end of Greenwood pow-wow days that the pow-wow was shut down by my Aunt Marie. She was a sainted woman. She was known for her humor and good nature in spite of the rough life she had to live.

Now Marie was known to dabble in a little "libation" every now and then but when she "felt her oats" (as they used to say), her sunny disposition turned off and "Darth" Marie would take her place. My mom tells how the housing residents would lock their doors, load up the kids, dogs and cats and head for the hills when they would hear Darth Marie coming their way. You could hear her cussing up a storm using words I'm sure even hardened veterans would turn red upon hearing. She would definitely carve out her niche in the Greenwood community — no question about that.

I used to be what we would call a "drum bum." This simply meant someone who sat in with no particular singing group but would go from drum to drum to "sit in." Folks were having a good time dancing to various inter-tribal songs and visiting about this and that when the announcer said over the loudspeaker system that "Marie is coming!"



Vince
TWO EAGLES

That's when I could hear unmistakable loud voice slurring her words but clear enough to make out what she was saying, coming from the Greenwood housing area. I never saw so many people move so quickly except in preparation for an oncoming thunderstorm. Folding chairs were folded up, dance regalia were gotten out of, people's watecha (leftovers) was quickly packed up, the children were immediately directed to their respective cars and even the pow-wow announcer was packing up his gear when Darth Marie pulled in. She wanted "to dance," she said, with a few expletives included for good measure, and she got a hold of the announcer's microphone (which at this point had been mercifully shut off) and began to share her unintelligible concerns. Folks were already driving off but I always felt a little sad for the announcer not being fast enough to have his equipment dismantled and loaded by the time Marie got there.

I had my family loaded and we never looked back for fear Aunt Marie would recognize me and come over to the car. We left nothing but our tracks as we pulled out. Years later, Aunt Marie sobered up (thankfully) and became a pillar of the Marty community. By then Greenwood housing was no more. They moved all the houses out and I think Greenwood just died a natural death. Folks still live around the area, the old softball field where Chris Thunderhorse used to coach us up-and-coming ballplayers on weekends is now overgrown with weeds. Chris was an extraordinary man because he took it upon himself, without financial help from anyone, to give of his time to us young folks at that time. His efforts kept us out of trouble, from getting bored and his presence got us in touch with the older generation. I'll never forget him and his coaching inspired me to coach little league baseball many years later. This was a great man. He was humble and straightforward with a person and inspiration and example to a whole generation. Save me a place at second base, Chris, it won't be long when some of us will be coming your way to see you again. Nina Pidamiya!

And now you know the rez of the story. Doksha (later) ...

YOUR LETTERS

Rolling Along

Gena Brandt, Yankton

Mission Chair, Bike Build committee (Karen Miller, Denise Willman, Dawn Popma)

First United Methodist Church, Missions Committee, would like to thank everyone in our community that helped with sponsoring the Bike Build team last week. This group of young people are biking from Providence, R.I., to Seattle this summer and have so much courage to embark on this journey. Our church was blessed by their visit thankful to share an evening with them to learn about their mission to raise awareness for affordable housing.

Thank you to Ace Hardware Bike Shop, HyVee, Walmart, *Press and Dakotan*, Summit Activities Center, Habitat for Humanity, Yankton County Board Members, for their contributions, and thank you to the host of people from our congregation that donated delicious food for these hungry bikers.

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The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor and asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

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SEN. TIM JOHNSON: 136 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (202) 224-5842; Sioux Falls Phone: (605) 332-8896; email: <http://johnson.senate.gov/emailform.html>

SEN. JOHN THUNE: United States Senate SR-493, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (866) 850-3855; Sioux Falls Phone: (605) 334-9596; Fax: (202) 228-3855; Web: thune.senate.gov.

REP. KRISTI NOEM: 226 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515; Washington Phone: (202) 225-2801; Sioux Falls Phone: (605) 367-8371; Fax: (202) 225-5823; email: visit@noem.house.gov; <https://noem.house.gov>

NEBRASKA

SEN. DEB FISCHER: 825 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (202) 224-6551; email: N/A

SEN. MIKE JOHANNIS: 1 Russell Courtyard, Washington, D.C. 20510; Washington Phone: (202) 224-4224; email: logon@http://johannis.senate.gov/public/?p=EmailSenatorJohannis

REP. JEFF FORTENBERRY: 1517 Longworth House, Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515; Washington Phone: (202) 225-4806; District Phone: (402) 438-1598; email: logon@www.house.gov/writerep/

REP. ADRIAN SMITH: 503 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515-2703; Washington Phone: (202) 225-6435; Fax: (202) 225-0207; District Phone: (308) 633-6333; email: logon@www.house.gov/writerep/