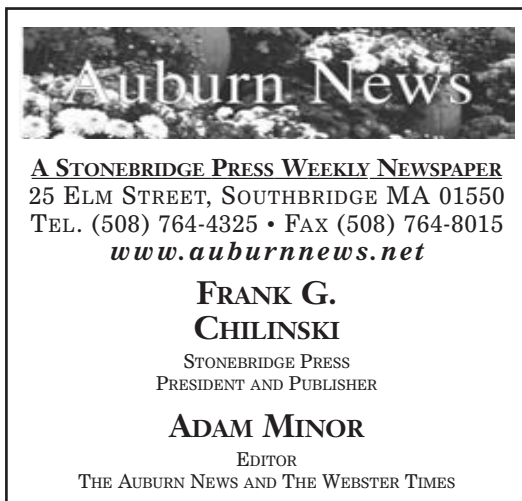


# OPINION/COMMENTARY



## EDITORIAL

### King of the road

I am the best driver ever to get behind a steering wheel. OK ... I know that's not true, but that is the exact sentence that pounds through my skull whenever I see one senseless act of road tomfoolery after another on our local streets, especially when the actions of one driver gone rogue puts me or other drivers around me in danger.



THE MINOR  
DETAILS  
ADAM MINOR

Please indulge me one more time and allow me to step up onto my soapbox one more time. The incident that sparks this mini-rant — and forgive me if the tone seems a little irritated, because, well, it is — happened on the way to work earlier this week. Near the state line between Southbridge and Woodstock, Conn., the road coming into Southbridge has been prepared for paving, and as I write this, is nothing but dirt and loose stone. Accordingly, one would think that the speed limit for such a road would be reduced, not only for your own safety, but for the safety of others.

Well, apparently, a certain Ford F-150 decided this was not the case.

I could tell something was awry when as I entered Southbridge and started on the dirt road, there was no one behind me, and I started to follow a couple cars that had the same idea as me — slower and steady.

Suddenly, I was being tailgated.

One thing you need to know about Route 198 in Southbridge is that, for the most part, it is not a straight road. It has many turns and isn't exactly ideal for racing.

As we approached a turn, this driver decided it was time to prove himself (and yes, it was a "he," as I became suspicious and started to keep an eye on him in my rear view mirror), as he took his life into his own hands, pulled past me AND the two other cars like Jimmie Johnson, nearly skidding out and kicking up dirt in the process, and went about his way, never to be heard from again, leaving a plethora of horn beeps, panicked faces and, no doubt, choice words. As for me, all I could do was gasp in horror, stare and pray that no oncoming traffic would be careening around the turn.

He was lucky that time.

As Route 198 became paved again, a vengeful piece of me hoped to see this man pulled over on the side of the road by Southbridge Police, but alas, no justice was done.

What could drive a person to such insane actions? What could lead to a decision like that? I doubt it was a drinking issue, as it was only 9 a.m. My mind immediately jumped to an emergency of some sort. Was he headed toward a hospital? My attitude lessened as I thought about the possibility that he was in a rush because a member of his family was in danger at Harrington Memorial Hospital. Honestly, if I were in his shoes, maybe I would have done the same thing, although getting to the hospital in one piece would, logically, seem like priority number one.

At the end of the day, everyone came out safe and sound, but the whole incident bugged me for a while because now, more than ever — and I know I am speaking in generalities — people seem to be driving with more reckless abandon and less concern. Do some drivers just not care? Or do they really think they are invincible?

Adam Minor may be reached at 508-909-4130, or by e-mail at aminor@stonebridgepress.com.



### Mini golf tournament announces winners

Courtesy photo

AUBURN — The Lorraine Gleick Nordgren Senior Center Annual Miniature Golf Tournament at Crystal Caves came to an end earlier this month. The winners of the tournament are, from left, Robert Jolie (first place); Jim Rennicks (second place); Delores Sciammacco (third place); Betty Jolie (fourth place) and Jerry Smith (Highest Score).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Larson: Why the rich are rich and the poor are poor

To the Editor:  
Recently, Elizabeth Warren, U.S. Sen. Scott Brown's Democrat opponent, created a YouTube sensation with her poo-pooing of the charge that the Obama administration is engaged in a strategy of class warfare.

"No, there is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody...You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid for."

I remind readers that she is only touting unionized elements here. She completely ignores the non-unionized forces that made such police and fire protection possible, our U.S. armed forces. She isn't going to mention them, as they tend to vote overwhelmingly Republican.

To a second point, if the infrastructure could make the rich rich, what effect would she argue that it would have had on the poor? Would she say they are poor because of the infrastructure? Or would she argue that the infrastructure made them richer than they

otherwise would have been without it? I argue to the contrary, that the rich and the poor, although equal before the law, are fundamentally different in their minds, regardless of the infrastructure. The difference in their thinking is what determined their success or lack of it. I argue that everyone is exactly where they are, based on the sum total of their previous decisions.

For example, I was recently chatting with a fellow who has been out of work for several years. He argued that the rich have to pay more; for instance, that hedge fund managers are getting away with financial murder. I asked him: "Why don't you become a hedge fund manager?" His reply: "I don't know how to do that."

And that is why the rich are rich and the poor are poor.

PAUL LARSON  
WORCESTER

## Day care, it's not just for children!

September 18-24 was National Adult Day Services Week, so it was appropriate that on Sept. 26 we opened Pakachoag Gardens, Auburn VNA Health Network's renamed and relocated program initiative to provide area seniors with comprehensive weekday adult day health services.

The services available to seniors at Pakachoag Gardens — socialization, companionship, daily exercise, nutrition, nursing, personal care, and other therapeutic activities — are increasingly in demand by our aging, and financially stressed, population.

I mention this because key findings from The MetLife National Study of Adult Day Services 2010 demonstrate the value of this rapidly expanding industry: Adult day services are a growing source of affordable long-term care. More than 4,600 adult day services centers across the U.S. (a 35 percent increase since 2002) provide care to over 260,000 participants and family caregivers — an increase of 63 percent since 2002.

Adult day care is a win/win for everyone, both the participant who attends the program and the caregiver who has primary responsibility for the senior. Adult day care provides a much-needed respite for the caregiver, affording a break from the physical demands and stress of providing round-the-clock care.

If you're a caregiver, it may be difficult to consider allowing "strangers" to care for your beloved family member. As a senior, it can be a challenge to admit that you need help, especially if you've been a highly independent person used to caring for others all your life.

According to ElderCare Online, you may want to seriously consider using adult day care when a senior:

- Can no longer structure his or her daily activities
  - Can't be safely left alone at home
  - Lives with someone who works outside the home or who is frequently away from home for other reasons
  - Is isolated and desires companionship
- For the participant, the benefits of adult day care can be extensive:
- A safe, secure environment in which to spend the day
  - Enjoyable and educational activities
  - Improvement in mental and physical health
  - Enhanced or maintained level of independence

## YOUR TURN

- Socialization and peer support
- Nutritious meals and snacks
- Medications administered by a registered nurse

Beyond the social and therapeutic value of adult day care there's definite economic value: Studies show that the delivery of community-based, long-term care services is a cost-effective alternative to nursing homes. In 2004, the average daily rate for a private room in a skilled nursing facility was \$192 for a private room or \$70,080 annually, and \$169 or \$61,685 annually for a semi-private room. The hourly rate for a home health aide was \$18.12. By contrast, in 2000, annual cost estimates were \$13,000 for adult day care and \$25,300 for assisted living.

This works out to an average daily cost of \$66 for an adult day care center, depending on where you live and the services provided. Professional health care services will mean higher fees. Many facilities offer services on a sliding fee scale, meaning that what you pay is based on your income and ability to pay.

While Medicare does not cover adult day care centers, Medicaid will pay most or all of the costs in licensed adult day health care settings and Alzheimer's focused centers, for participants with very low income and few assets. When looking into an Adult Day Care Center, make sure you ask about financial assistance and possible scholarships (for example, Pakachoag Gardens accepts MassHealth, Elder Services, and private pay).

Private medical insurance policies sometimes cover a portion of adult day care center costs when licensed medical professionals are involved in the care. Long-term care insurance may also pay for adult day services, depending on the policy. Additionally, dependent-care tax credits may be available to you as caregiver.

As always, the Auburn VNA Health Network Team is available for your health and wellness needs with a complete range of home care services. For more information or questions, please call us at 508-791-0081. Be happy, be well and be safe!

Kimberly Harmon is President and CEO of Auburn VNA Health Network. AVHN provides more than 19,000 home visits annually to more than 700 individuals in Auburn, Worcester and surrounding towns. Kim welcomes your questions, comments or concerns about any specific health issues. You may reach her at kharmon@auburnvna.org or 508-791-0081.

## Car wars

A recent editorial in a Stonebridge Press publication (maybe even this one) caught my eye — and stuck in my craw. Written by *Southbridge Evening News* Staff Writer Gus Steeves, the editorial made an impassioned plea for the case against automobiles — or at least personal automobile traffic. Headlined "The madness of our car culture," the column employed logic, reason, research, and an environmentalist viewpoint to explain why and how our current transport "system does not work."

Mr. Steeves is an excellent reporter, talented writer, through researcher, and eloquent spokesman for his cause. Nevertheless, his column demands — even at the risk of my butting heads with an expert — an attempt at rebuttal.

First of all, we both agree on the insanity of driving "umpteen miles in traffic jams" on a regular basis. I recently made a couple of trips to Belmont, Mass. The ride in took 63 minutes each time; the ride home, each time, took more than two and a half hours. I discovered I don't respond well to such frustration, vehicular claustrophobia, and wasted time.



AS YOU  
LIKE IT

MARK ASHTON

The same frustration can be found much closer to home, as well — just about every afternoon between 2 and 4 in downtown Southbridge. Traveling just 1 mile to home can take as many as 15 minutes if one gets embroiled in the line of vehicles from the AO rotary to South Street. So I'm just as angry about traffic delays as the next guy, who I wish would just get off his cell phone and out of my way.

My first instinct in these unpleasant travels, however, is NOT to blame car companies, oil corporations, insurers, road builders, or even the state itself, all of whom the recent editorial accuses of domestic — as well as global — terrorism by way of corporate profiteering. The editorial's basic premise, in fact, is flawed — and a little too socialistic — in its assertions that our current system is "making us physically and mentally unhealthy" by feeding us "blather" that equates cars with "individualism, strength, control over nature, sexuality," etc.

The editorialist calls it insanity to equate a car with "some symbol of 'freedom.'" Not at all. While having a car can enslave those who buy beyond their means, and while I wouldn't mind buying my gas from some "gasroots" Tea Party or Occupy movement, car ownership can also be liberating, for it allows each individual to pursue employment, recreation, entertainment, and whatever at his or her own pace.

In railing against all autos, the writer automatically pleads for better rail service, "a good train network with electric buses or trolleys connecting neighborhoods to train stations." I've nothing against such things — except as they might nowadays add even more traffic to already overcrowded roadways. But there's no practical way to replace all personal vehicles with any mass transit that can be envisioned. While trolleys, buses, trains, and trams can certainly help deliver masses to specific large-volume areas — shopping malls, downtown business districts, entertainment venues, maybe even grocery mega-stores — they will never provide the options for personal freedom of travel that cars now do.

If the truth be told, a good many of today's car operators are young mothers transporting themselves and children to grocery stores, hair appointments, day care centers, after-school soccer games, and countless other daily errands that make up the fabric of modern living.

Personal cars DO provide freedom — of movement, of expression, of creativity, of opportunities to live, worship, recreate, and even "waste" time in accordance with personal choices. Who am I to decide for my neighbor where or when he must buy his groceries, pursue his career, go to the cinema, catch a ball game, cruise up and down the avenue, attend a nephew's wedding, take a vacation, further his education, grab a late-night doughnut, take the family for a Sunday drive, or surprise an old friend with a visit?

If anything in America symbolizes freedom of choice, it is indeed the personal vehicle — the steel and rubber embodiment of the American Dream.

And, by the way, that dream is NOT to foul the air; to wage war; to waste time or resources or money. It is simply to enjoy personal mobility — within the bounds of legal activities and personal accomplishment, freedom of movement to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

As to the editorialist's statistics decrying how much money American drivers "waste" on cars and such, two things: So what — that's strictly a matter of individual priorities and choices! And, as the most recent fortune found in my most recent fortune cookie profoundly asserts: "47 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot."

The free market system (which also allows for the free exchange of ideas) may indeed be flawed — whenever and wherever it is presided over by flawed human beings, but it is still superior to whatever else has been attempted over the course of human history. That history is man's story of mobility, from land to sea to space — from foot to horse to wagon to rail to personal internal-combustion-engined vehicle. If that fact tends to drive some of the anarchists among us crazy, then it's also just a very short drive.

Parasprokian of the week: "I want to die quietly, peacefully, in my sleep, like my grandfather — not yelling and screaming like the passengers in his car!"

Mark Ashton writes a weekly column for Stonebridge Press publications.