

The Busiest Summer of Our Lives: Trips, Galas, Levies and Leaves

Introduction

Ruth and I have had some busy summers. One summer (1966), we moved to Kent just as Ruth's father had died and I was after I finishing my doctorate and starting a new job at Kent State University. We remodeled our house, and got the three boys started in school.

That was a busy summer! Sixteen summers we traveled to different locations around the United States to live (CO, MD, RI, CA, IN, FL) while I was teaching young Naval Officers who were being assigned to NROTC Units at various universities around the United States. Those were busy summers! But, considering we have been retired for ten years, I believe that this past summer, oozing a bit into the fall, has been the busiest one Ruth and I have ever had!

Let me explain. In the summer of 2005, Ruth and I were invited to co-chair (with Rosemary and Dan Rhodes) the inaugural Robinson Memorial Gala... a black tie fund raising event to be held in the fall of 2006. The four of us had co-chaired the inaugural Robinson "Different Kind of Golf Outing" and the inaugural (and last) "Day At the Races." Both were very successful fund raising events for the Robinson Memorial Hospital Foundation, each raising over twenty-five thousand dollars. We agreed to work on this project and set a goal to make it a fun and high-end event

and to raise “at least” thirty thousand dollars. We started work on that project.

In January 2006 Ruth and I were invited to co-chair the fall 2006 Portage County Health Levy...a levy, which funds the county health department. Health departments inspect water and food sources, give immunizations and flu shots and in general, insure that we have a healthy place to live and work. Ruth served on the 2005 fall campaign, placing over one hundred signs around the county, and when it failed, said (turning on her personal and nursing charm), “Glenn, we can get this thing passed and help the residents of our county.

They have asked us to do this...it is something that needs our effort.” We talked about it for several months and she became more and more persuasive (“I will do most of the work. We can get lots of folks to help. Just help me raise some money for the campaign.”) I agreed to work on a project, which had not passed in fifty-one years and had lost twenty-four consecutive times. Does anyone besides me see a problem here?

Ruth spent lots of time with Rosemary and Deb Solon, The Foundation Executive Director, during Fall 2005 and Winter 2006, along with many committed committee members, selecting the location, the band, the logo, the evening format, the menu, and even the invitations and stationary. The five of them would meet each week and then will our entire committee once a month. One of the guys on the committee, who shall remain nameless, said, “Why are we

meeting so often...we should be able to do this in one or two meetings!" All the women just said, "Oh Norm!" In any event, the planning was going well and lots of folks expressed their interest in coming to this event. Our fund raising goal was now fifty thousand dollars!

After Ruth and I returned from Florida in March we got to work on the levy. We formed the committee, wrote letters to friends, committee members, health department staff, hospital medical staff, area businesses, health department vendors, service clubs, health organizations and area foundations requesting money for our campaign. We prepared bookmarks for distribution telling the cost of this levy and what the health department does to keep us safe and healthy. We developed eight ads explaining the health department and eight ads explaining the levy costs. We optimistically, reserved four front-page ads space in area newspapers for the last four days before election. We organized a "creative committee" to suggest ideas for campaign themes and strategies for the campaign. We met with ten area political leaders to map a strategy.

We developed a "letters to the Editor" committee to send dozens of positive letters to area newspapers. We sought the endorsement for our campaign from area leaders and organizations. We wrote letters to churches to place announcements in their newsletters. With the help of the health department, we organized a speakers' bureau and a list of fairs and festivals to visit. As the funds came in, we ordered t-shirts, hats, yard signs, and made commitments for meeting rooms and parades. The levy was on the May

ballot, and without any campaign, lost by a staggering 65%-35%. We had our work out for us! We knew we could pass this levy!

You can't just work on Galas and Levies! We planned a trip with Ruth's niece, Judy Pelphrey of Findlay, Ohio, to visit her brother Jim, Ruth's nephew, in the Czech Republic, where he is serving as the head of security for the U.S. Embassy. Judy came to us with this idea as a way of celebrating several special birthdays (hers and Ruth's). After talking about it for a while during the summer of 2005, we decided to take a Trafalgar Tour of eight Eastern European countries, ending in with a visit with Jim. The reservations were made!

And oh by the way, Ruth, believed that we must take our two youngest grandsons, Connor and Austin, to some western states, as we did Dan and Andrew, ten years ago when they were similar ages (While we were still mobile and had our memories). So, we worked with our travel agent, Susan, to plan a one-week trip out west with the boys. Are you getting the picture about a busy summer?

Oh, and we were hosting a luncheon for ten that we sold at the Rotary Auction, Ruth has semi-monthly visits to her very ill sister in Columbus, I do all of my own gardening and lawn mowing (just several acres) and I had agreed to host the September Rotary programs on the Worst Natural Disasters to befall America (and would be giving the one on the Johnstown Flood) and organizing the Rotary month. I had six professional speeches scheduled in various locations.... and, oh yes, we have children and grandchildren who

request our attention and time. We have worries too...kids (Jill is a paramedic diving into burning cars and Jeff races motorcycles that go two hundred miles an hour) and grandkids (Dan is in Iraq for the second time, Andrew is no longer living with us but we see him a lot and the two teenagers are always a concern.) We usher at church and do the leaves and weeds there. Things are starting to get really busy!

The Trips

The trips went off without a hitch! Judy, Ruth and I visited Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic over an eighteen-day period and it was one of the greatest trips of our life. You can read about it on my web site www.drjglenn.net Tap the Travel Log button, and then select **Eastern Europe with Judy** for the story, complete with pictures.

Upon our return from Eastern Europe, we mowed the lawn, worked on the Levy and Gala, and headed west with Connor and Austin. We flew to Denver, where we rented a car and headed west. We saw the Rockies, stayed at a dude ranch, visited Arches and Mesa Verde National Parks, Taos, Santa Fe and Albuquerque.... and shopped and shopped! We swam every day and had a great time, which you can read about in detail on www.drjglenn.net Select the Travel Log button, **Southwest US with Connor and Austin**. (We have a history of taking grandchildren on trips...you might like to visit my web site and read, **Italy with Dan or Western Europe with Andrew**.) We also went to Tennessee with

Jane and Jack Fender to visit the Martha and Bob Alfonso and had a wonderful time catching up on our families.

The Speeches

All of my speeches were in Ohio and they went very well...I have this speech thing down to a science! The most interesting part of this portion of the summer was the preparation of my speech on the Johnstown Flood. We took Austin to see and photograph the site for my power point presentation to the Rotary Club of Kent, the Kent Coterie and the Portage County School Boards Association. During the month of September, three friends and I presented programs on America's Greatest Natural Disasters in term of lives lost to the Kent Rotary Club.

The speakers and programs were: David Dix, **The Chicago and Peshtigo Fires of 1871** (250 lives lost in the Chicago Fire and 2400 in the Peshtigo Fire, which occurred the same night in Wisconsin); Rebekah Wright Kulis, **The San Francisco Earthquake of 1906** (225K left homeless and 3000 died); Mary Beth Harper, **The Galveston Hurricane of 1900** (8-12,000 lost there lives); and **The Johnstown Flood of 1889** (3400 deaths) which I presented. A great month of programs on an important topic in American history!

Several Other Commitments

The Rotary Brunch for the Rebekah and Mike, Jan and John, Suzanne and Nelson, and, Mary Beth and V.J. went very well. We had Jack Hurd play the piano and when he played

the songs I had suggested for a “Name That Tune” contest...no one had ever heard of most of them. Was our audience too young, or were the hosts too old?

Our bi-monthly trips to Columbus to visit Ruth’s sister, Mary, were sad as she continues to slip because of her stomach cancer. For me personally, the saddest part is seeing the pain Ruth feels losing a sister. Mary has had a troubled life, but Ruth has always been there for her...as she is now.

The yard work never ends. I thought Connor would be the main man this summer, but he got a full time job painting with Andrew and I am on my own! I actually love working in the yard, or as Ruth says when folks call and ask for me, “He’s out digging holes.”

And there was golf too! So many stories! My main partner this summer was Jim Myers, one of the world’s most positive people. We played a lot with Henry Halim and Tom Blosser. We have so much fun, but miss Jim Schubert a lot. My handicap now stands at 17, the lowest since I started playing at age fifty-eight.

I love golf and keep thinking I am going to be even better...maybe that positive stuff from Jim Myers is starting to affect my logic. Jim and I both believe we will get our first holes-in-one some day...but it hasn’t happened yet. If it does, there will be a separate story on my web site.... probably, in all caps and in color!

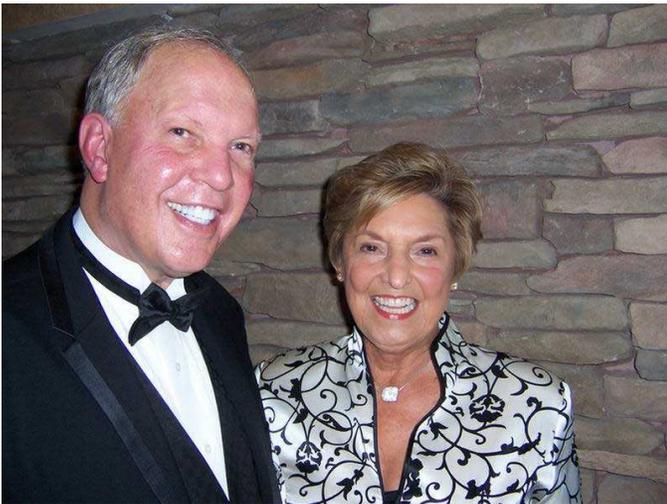
The Gala

After weeks and weeks of planning and days and days of stuffing Champaign glasses with confetti to hide the winning number for the \$10,000 diamond ring, and hours of listing silent auction items and of picking out the perfect dress (Ruth got hers in Santa Fe...can we deduct that trip as a business expense?) we held the event at the Bertram Inn in Aurora. WE had to turn guests away as the room was limited to three hundred and seventy revelers.

Tickets were one hundred twenty-five dollars each and one hundred and fifteen and nearly every dollar of that was committed to the dinner, open bar, wine, band, cubic zirconium for each guest, a chocolate bar, a piano player, advertising and decorations. Our goal was now \$75,000 as we were able to get numerous table sponsors and advertising in our program.

The unknown money factor was the silent auction, forty-one fairly high-end donations. Rosemary, Dan, Ruth and I greeted everyone at the door and committee members explained seating and Champaign Glass purchases. Cocktail hour and dinner went off without a hitch and the silent auction items did better than we expected. The band played until almost midnight and the dance floor was crowded until the last dance...when the last dance was announced, a man in his nineties, who had danced nearly every dance the entire evening, whispered a request to the band...he wanted a polka! They played one and he and his partner danced as

we all stood around and clapped in time with the music. What a wonderful way to end the evening! A number of the committee stayed at the Bertram Inn that evening and celebrated our success with a brunch in the morning. The final result...high evaluations, lots of fun and a net of One hundred and five thousand dollars for the Oncology Ward at the Robinson Memorial Hospital (WE were later to find out that we could leverage this money to complete an eight hundred thousand dollar renovation to the patient comfort section of the ward...making this Gala success even sweeter! We weren't going to work on this event next year, but after talking to Rosemary and Dan we have decided to do it again one more time...we have more ideas!



Co-chairs Rosemary and Dan

Table Setting at Gala



Ruth and Glenn



Carlyn and Ben

The Levy

Ruth and I worked harder on this project than any other community service project with which we have been involved. All told we worked over seven hundred and fifty hours to try to pass this levy...our efforts, and the efforts of our committee were not enough. I will describe some of the things we did and why we believe the levy didn't pass in several documents, which I will include that were sent to our committee and one Op Ed article that appeared in the newspaper.

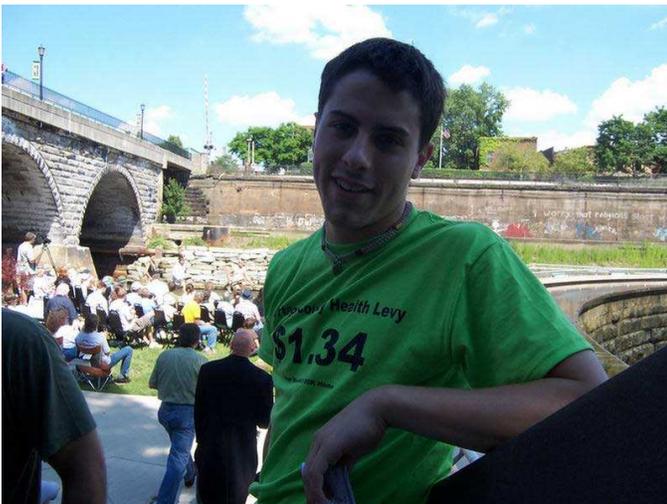
Ruth and I were convinced that we could turn the tide of twenty-five consecutive defeats over the past twenty-five years with hard work and a dedicated committee...it was not to be! All of our efforts resulted in a vote just four percent better than in the May election where nothing was done to promote the levy. In May it went down 35% For - 65%

Against and with our effort failed 39% For – 61% Against! All that effort for only a four percent improvement. We were very disappointed to say the least!!



Getting Ready for Manua Parade

Tractor Pull at the Ox Roast



Andrew at Playing Heritage Park

Levy Babies: Sandy, Ruth and Kathy



Ruth Getting Her Flu Shot



Levy Committee Meeting



We Even Enlisted Betty and Fred



Last Newspaper Ad

Following the Election, this is what we wrote to our contributors:

November 14, 2006

Dear Levy Contributor:

Ruth and I are writing this final note about the Portage County Health Levy to those of you who cared enough to support this worthwhile cause with your contributions. The news, as you already know, was not good. We lost 39% For - 61% Against (of the over 43,000 votes cast), only 4% better than in May when no ads were placed, no signs displayed and no effort made to promote the levy. It is discouraging to lose so badly after the hundreds and hundreds of hours of work by our committee.

Our committee attended dozens of Fairs/Festivals and spoke at PTA's, Boards of Education, Candidates' Nights, Churches and Service Clubs. We purchased and wore one hundred and twenty shirts, one hundred and twenty-five hats and two hundred and fifty buttons. We placed and carried five hundred and fifty signs and distributed nine thousand bookmarks telling our story. We had forty-eight, nine-inch ads in the Record Courier, Aurora Advocate and Gateway News.... plus four front-page ads. The SAWCSaPPB team (Standing Around Waving Campaign Signs at People Passing By) waved at over twenty-one thousand cars in their twenty-two outings. We had six radio ads on WNIR. We had over fifteen Letters to the Editor and endorsements by the

Record Courier, League of Women Voters, the Portage County School Board and Howie.

We also had several articles in the Kent Stater newspaper. We had signs on cars. We did almost everything we could with the almost \$8000 we were able to raise from friends, Health Department staff, the Board of Health, our committee, one business (Home Savings) and one vendor. If we sound disappointed it is because we are! We were optimistic we would have a greater impact on the voters of Portage County. We take solace in the belief that more folks now know what the Health Department does than they did before...and that some may use these services to get needed immunizations and assistance with identifying contagious diseases.

Personally, we believe we must find a different way to fund the work of the Health Department...e.g., a) Combining the County's three Health Departments (having Kent and Ravenna voting on this levy would have made a great difference), and/or b) "Charging Back" to the townships and/or the county for these needed services. Either of the above would make Portage County similar to many of the other counties in Ohio.

It was the Levy committee's best effort, and ours, and Ruth and I thank all of you for helping us try to make Portage County a safer and healthier place to live. We have attached a copy of our Income/Expenditures for you to see how our funds were spent. As you can see, we did not use any of the funds for new carpet or cars. We may be defeated, but we

have not lost our sense of humor! We still have our many friends and look forward to new projects...just not ones in the political arena.

Warmly,

*Ruth and Glenn Saltzman
Levy Co-Chairs (Ret.)*

Attachment: 2006 Portage Health Levy Income/Expenditures

Income and Expense

Revenue:

Health Department Staff	\$1660.00
Board of Health	550.00
Business	200.00
Vendor	100.00
Friends	5109.00
Previous Balance	<u>484.89</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$8103.89</u>

Expense:

Newspaper Ads charged only 1/2 rate	\$2258.08
T-Shirts-120	821.98
Hats-25	128.10
Yard Signs-300	1394.31
Media – Ryan Wolfe	750.00
Bookmarks-9000	340.00
Buttons-500	244.90
Postage	807.30
Checks	9.51
Chamber of Commerce-Rootstown Community Awareness Day	10.00
Chamber of Commerce-Streetsboro Community Showcase	100.00
Mantua Parade	30.00
Paper & Envelopes	24.73
Board of Elections-Absentee Ballots	60.00
Radio Ads-WNIR	861.00
Elks Club-Use of facility for meetings	<u>150.00</u>
Total	<u>\$7989.91</u>
Balance	<u>\$113.98</u>

This was the Op Ed article that appeared in the Record Courier Newspaper:

Can We Ever Approve a Portage County Health Levy?

When we agreed to co-chair the Portage County Health Levy Campaign Committee (Issue20) for this past election, we naively believed that if voters knew about the important services of the Health Department, the rather small request for funds (\$12.60 per year per \$100K home) and how the staff of the Health Department had been reduced from nearly sixty to twenty-one in the fifty-one years since an increase had been approved.... that nearly everyone would want to support this levy.

Our hopes were further buoyed by the fact that in all of our presentations, only two persons objected to the levy (One said that the Health Department did not help her brother when he was dying of cancer and when I told her that this is not what health departments do said, "I still won't vote for it." Another said that I was misleading the folks assembled, by saying that homes in their township were valued at nearly the county average. This person said that homes in their township averaged more than \$300K. When I offered to show him the County Auditor statements, he said he didn't want to see this data because I "was not telling the truth.")

Everyone else we met said they supported the levy and could not see why it hadn't passed long ago. When we approached the Board of Elections Headquarters on election evening, we did so with confidence that all of the

committee's hard work would pay off with a victory for the residents of Portage County. We were saddened by the crushing 39%-61% defeat, only a small improvement over the May election when no campaigning was done. We didn't get the results we wanted, but we learned a lot in the process.

What did we learn over the course of this campaign? We learned that:

- 1. Hard work on a project like this is not enough.** Our committee could not have worked harder. Our committee logged several thousand hours telling the Portage Health Department story.
- 2. More money would not have significantly helped us** change the systemic problem of local organization and funding issues.
- 3. A voter's knowledge of the facts regarding an issue is not as important as any particular value they might hold** (e.g., "No more taxes!" ...or... "They are doing a good job, why give them more?")
- 4. Approving a countywide issue with out the assistance of Kent and Ravenna voters is very difficult.** Three health districts in one county divide and confuse the voters. Many of our Kent and Ravenna friends thought they had always voted for the Health Department levies, and were surprised they were not included in the populations deciding this issue.

They also did not realize that some services provided by these departments are contracted from the Portage County Health Department. Of the twenty-five Portage County villages and townships, only four (Franklin Township, Hiram Village, Mantua Village and Sugar Bush Knolls) voted favorably for the Health Levy. Of the 118,735 population in the county (Excluding Kent and Ravenna), 79,714 (67%) are registered to vote and of the registered voters 43,588 (54%) actually voted. Of those who voted only 39% voted for the Health Levy. These numbers are foreboding and do not hold much promise for future levy campaigns.

5. The Portage County Health Department is not funded like most other health departments in Ohio. Most Ohio health departments receive all or a major portion of their funding from villages and townships. Of the thirteen Northeastern Ohio Health Districts, eight are funded 100% by their townships and villages, four are funded by a combination of village/township support and tax levies, and Portage County is the lone county to be funded by only a tax levy. Taxpayers fund only 17% of the Portage Health Department budget, with the remainder coming from grants, and fees from licenses and inspections. The only money available for emergency planning and preparation is from unstable and unpredictable grant funds!

6. It is interesting how various groups decide to support issues or candidates in an election. While some Ohio churches were vocal about the gambling issue, some health groups and hospitals supported the smoke free issue, and some unions took positions on the minimum wage issue,

only the League of Women Voters, the Portage County Board of Education, the Record Publishing Company and Howie encouraged support of this health levy. That was surprising to us because this levy affects the health of every resident of, and visitor to, Portage County. Although it may be unpopular to get behind a tax increase...this was a matter of our health.

One person told us, after the election, that he had not voted for Issue 20 because they were doing a great job, and if they could do that with very little funding, then why give them more. He said, "...schools shut down busing and sports if levies are not passed and states/counties/townships reduce services when funds are not available." I asked him if the Health Department should stop giving immunizations and making sure our food and water sources were safe. He said, "No, you can't do that." And of course, I agreed with him. But the Health Department needs more funding to not only carry out the mandated services we need, but to be prepared for pending disasters that may face us, such as a pandemic flu outbreak, which would be disastrous if we are not prepared.

Ruth and I met many wonderful folks during the campaign, many who volunteered to be on our committee or donate funds to support this effort. We learned a lot and do not regret a minute we spent working on this important issue. The committee does not feel it lost, we feel happy that more folks know about the services of the Health Department and will get their children immunized sooner, avoiding many medical problems. On the other hand, we feel sad that so

many wonderful Portage County residents won't be as safe as they might have been had Issue 20 been approved.

Our Conclusion: In the absence of a county health catastrophe, we doubt that a similar levy can be passed given the current configuration and funding of this county health district. Some might say that the voters of Portage deserve what they get. We don't agree! We believe that organizational and funding steps should be taken to insure that Portage County residents remain safe and healthy.

Ruth and Glenn Saltzman
Franklin Township

Editors Note: Ruth Saltzman is a retired Registered Nurse and Glenn Saltzman is an Emeritus Professor of Behavioral Science and former Director of the Division of Basic Medical Sciences at the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine. Both are proud to be residents of Portage County.

The operative word in the letter above is that we have retired from political leadership efforts. Not because we are disillusioned, but because we have other things to do and believe the health Department can better use our help in having us lobby for a different organizational structure and funding method. We are working on this!

Leaves

With Jill and Dave's help, the thirty-hours of leaves were finished today!

Conclusion

This was a fun summer for the most part. Probably a little too busy for folks about to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary next spring, but a great way to put our commitment to helping others to the real test. We loved working with so many wonderful folks and seeing so much good come from our small effort. It is amazing what just a few folks can do to make a difference! We will keep at it...in the belief that the easiest way to live a life is to serve others, have fun doing that and stay away from grumpy people. We did that this summer and feel very rewarded.

Ruth and Glenn Saltzman
November 21, 2006