

## Best News Coverage Under Deadline Pressure/Category 1

### Daniels won't run

#### Mary Beth Schneider The Indianapolis Star

Gov. Mitch Daniels and many Republicans think he could have been the next president of the United States – but he will not run, saying his wife and daughters vetoed that choice.

“I will not be a candidate,” Daniels said in a statement given exclusively late Saturday to *The Indianapolis Star*.

Those words ended 17 months of speculation and downright begging from anxious Republicans searching for a candidate who can beat President Barack Obama.

But in the end, Daniels said, his decision was simple.

“On matters affecting us all, our family constitution gives a veto to the women’s caucus, and there is no override provision,” Daniels said. “Simply put, I find myself caught between two duties. I love my country; I love my family more.”

Daniels’ decision throws the Republican quest to find a nominee into disarray.

Some candidates – including former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty – have yet to ignite much passion.

Others, including former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin and Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., have some passionate followers but haven’t yet shown they can build the national support necessary to win the White House.

And other potential candidates had earlier said no, including Daniels’ close friend Haley Barbour, the Mississippi governor who also cited family concerns.

Daniels had been viewed by many GOP insiders as their best hope and by many Democrats as a formidable threat.

A former political director to President Ronald Reagan and a former budget director to President George W. Bush, he had wide-ranging support among some of the most influential Republican insiders and the ability to raise money. Big money. Fast.

And he had what many in the GOP think is the right message: A call to war against what he dubbed “the red menace” of fiscal debt.

He’ll still push that message, he indicated, but not as a candidate for president.

“I am deeply concerned, for the first time in my life, about the future of our Republic,” Daniels said in his statement.

The nation, he said, must address two questions: “Does the government work for the people or vice versa? And, are we Americans still the kind of people who can successfully govern ourselves, discipline ourselves financially, put the future and our children’s interest ahead of the present and our own?”

It was that message of fiscal discipline that enticed Daniels to even think of entering the presidential race, only two years after he’d promised voters in 2008 that he was making his final run for the only political office he’d ever hold: governor.

Mark Lubbers, a long-time associate and adviser to Daniels, and Indiana Republican Party Chairman Eric Holcomb, who managed the governor’s 2008 re-election campaign, told *The Star* that in late January 2010, Daniels met in Scottsdale, Ariz., with a group of eight men who had been pushing him not to shut the door on a White House run.

In addition to Lubbers and Holcomb, they included Charlie Black, who was a top campaign adviser to three presidents: Reagan and both George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, and Al Hubbard, an Indiana businessman who also worked in both Bush administrations.

Daniels had been resistant, telling the group as well as any reporter who asked that he wasn’t running for president.

In Scottsdale, he opened the door.

With, Lubbers said, three conditions.

First, he’d say what he believed, “unconditionally and unconstrained.”

Second, Daniels told the group that “everybody in the room needed to understand he was going to call for a truce on these non-core (social) issues.”

Lastly, “he wanted to make sure that everyone understood that his family was likely to be disinclined. .... He hadn’t talked to them about it yet, but obviously when you’re a husband and father you know how your kids and your wife feel, and he was sure they would be disinclined to this.”

It wasn’t just the fact that his wife, Cheri, had filed for divorce in 1993. She later married a California physician before divorcing again and remarrying Daniels in 1997.

That already had come under fire, with questions raised about Cheri leaving four young daughters behind in Indiana — something Daniels denied in a separate statement Saturday night.

“The notion that Cheri ever did or would ‘abandon’ her girls or parental duty is the reverse of the truth and absurd to anyone who knows her, as

I do, to be the best mother any daughter ever had,” Daniels said.

But, Lubbers said, the family knew that the decision meant their lives would be forever changed, with a loss of privacy and always the fear for their safety.

Despite his initial belief that family concerns would outweigh all other considerations, Daniels began taking steps to explore a bid.

He gave national interviews, including one last June when he told *The Weekly Standard*, a neoconservative magazine, the next president would have to call a truce on social issues to focus on fiscal concerns. It caused an uproar that threatened to derail his potential candidacy before it even began.

At the same time, though, Daniels’ focus on the nation’s fiscal condition was finding an audience. He was touted by columnists such as George Will and David Brooks as the man the GOP was looking for and the country needed. He won applause at events such as the Conservative Political Action Conference in February, where he said the defeat of the “red menace” of national debt was “the mission of our era.”

And, Lubbers and Holcomb said, he had built up a waiting army of both volunteers and donors.

“There was a gigantic list of people who said they were willing to invest in a presidential campaign that made these points and the vast majority of those people, much to the consternation of the existing candidates in the field, stayed out of those other campaigns,” Lubbers said.

That, he said, “created a dam of money that was waiting for Mitch’s decision.”

Lubbers said Daniels was “genuinely amazed” at the momentum that built behind his campaign — from the big-money people willing to fly to Indianapolis to hear his ideas to the college students who began a movement to draft him as a candidate.

He may have been amazed by one more thing: He discovered he wanted to run.

“All throughout 2010 he was ‘I don’t know if I want to do this or not. I want to advance these issues, but I don’t know if I want to be president,’” Lubbers recalled.

After all, as a close adviser to two presidents, he’d seen what the job does to both the men who holds it and their families.

But on Super Bowl Sunday, Lubbers said, “I asked point blank: ‘Do you want to do this?’ And he said yes.”

“Eighty percent of me wants to do this,” Daniels told Lubbers.

It became a joke between them that “if more than 80 percent of you wants to do this, you’re sick.”

Daniels, Lubbers said, “hoped and prayed that the family would have a change of heart.”

In a phone call Saturday to that group of eight who had met with him in Scottsdale, Daniels told them he would not run. They believed he could win — in part because of that social truce that had so infuriated some conservatives but broadened his appeal to independent voters.

The governor’s voice broke only once, Lubbers said, when he spoke of duty to country.

But no one tried to talk him out of the decision.

“You can’t talk somebody out of a decision like this,” Lubbers said.

And both said that despite the emotion, they believed Daniels had no regrets.

“I think it’s fabulously ironic that the candidate criticized by the family values caucus has made a decision based 100 percent on family values,” Lubbers said.

Holcomb called his emotions “bittersweet.”

The nation, he said, will miss a unique talent that blends an ability to connect with voters at the retail level with a wonkish ability to work on detailed policies.

“For his 800-pound brain, he’s got a populist instinct that is just remarkable,” Lubbers said.

There is, still, a chance that the public will find out.

Daniels said nothing, in either the statement he gave *The Star* or in his phone call with his friends, about whether he also was ruling out accepting the vice presidential nomination or any other job in a future Republican administration.

“I’m sure he would not answer,” Lubbers said. “I’m sure he would call it a ridiculous hypothetical, though I’m sure it’s going to be the first thing everybody asks.”

But Daniels clearly will be trying to push the GOP candidates to take up the fiscal mantle. He’ll do so this week, when he joins former President Bill Clinton and Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., on Wednesday at a Washington forum on finding bipartisan solutions to the nation’s long-term debt. And he’ll do so this fall, when goes on a tour to promote his book on that issue.

Holcomb said he is “optimistic” that another GOP candidate will take on this message, and win with it.

“I hope people realize why so many people were drawn to Mitch Daniels,” Holcomb said, “and take note of his courage and willingness to speak plainly about the real problems our country faces.”

## **Best News Coverage With No Deadline Pressure/Category 2**

### **Indiana playing game of hold 'em**

**Keith Benman**

**The Times (Munster)**

Linda Humes, of Chicago, was playing craps at Majestic Star Casino last November and was thrilled when she won \$300.

Then the box man invalidated the throw, saying it had bounced off a player's chest.

Humes and another gambler, Bernice Thompson, said no way.

They both contended it had hit the rim of the table and bounced in. Both immediately asked for an Indiana Gaming Commission agent, who is empowered to hear such disputes.

He reviewed surveillance tapes, Humes said. The best he could say is the dice may have struck someone's hand.

He couldn't tell for sure, but he confirmed the box man's call. Not to be denied, Humes and Thompson filed formal written complaints with the gaming commission that day.

Eight months later, in early July, both still were waiting for a response from the gaming commission.

"I thought maybe they would look at it and be fair," Humes said recently. "But after two months I just quit looking for it. I figured they just didn't care."

Humes and Thompson are not alone. A Times public records request reveals that 17 of 37 written complaints gamblers filed against Northwest Indiana casinos in 2009 went unanswered by the commission as of July 1 of this year.

Ernest Yelton, executive director of the Indiana Gaming Commission, could offer no explanation of why nearly half the complaints submitted to the commission last year had not been answered as of last month.

He could offer no evidence they had been investigated at all.

"It was my understanding that we responded to every one, that we handled every complaint we received," Yelton said when questioned about the commission's low response rate.

Of the 20 written complaints the commission did answer in 2009, only one was decided in favor of a patron. When first questioned in early June about how many written complaints from gamblers were filed with the commission per year, Yelton said he had no idea.

The commission does not tally or track complaints, responses or results. That is when The Times filed its first request under Indiana's Access to Public Records Act.

The five gaming boats in Northwest Indiana are Horseshoe Casino, in Hammond; Ameristar Casino, in East Chicago; Majestic Star I and Majestic Star II, in Gary; and Blue Chip Casino, in Michigan City. Almost 13.8 million gaming patrons came through their doors last year, and they raked in more than \$1.2 billion in total revenue. In 2009, 10 gambler complaints were filed with the gaming commission against Horseshoe Casino.

A total of 22 complaints were lodged against Majestic Star's two boats. Four were filed against Ameristar Casino and one against Blue Chip Casino. Majestic Star General Manager Larry Buck said he was surprised 22 patrons filed written complaints with the gaming commission against his adjacent casinos in 2009, as he remembered seeing far fewer.

Gaming commission records show the agency never answered, and apparently never investigated, nine of those complaints. Buck did not think his casinos had been the subject of any written complaints yet this year.

Buck said it is his understanding he is given a copy of each one. Complaints provided to The Times by the gaming commission show that four written complaints were filed against Majestic Star's two casinos in the first half of this year.

Two of those were from Cynthia Lockett, 41, of Gary. On April 27, she submitted a complaint to the gaming commission in a dispute over \$16,000 in winnings she saw flash up on the Hot Hot Super Jackpot slot machine she was playing at the casino the day before. Her gambling buddy Roscoe Barber and a casino attendant verified it, she said.

But then the reels turned a bit more and erased the winnings from the digital readout. So Lockett cashed out her voucher to see if the winnings were there. They weren't. A floor supervisor later had the machine opened and said the machine had malfunctioned, which voids all payouts.

Not to be denied, Lockett filed her written complaint. Lockett did not receive a response in the mail until late July. The letter told her the Indiana Gaming Commission investigated her complaint and "determined the slot machine malfunctioned, performing a 'reel tilt.' "

The letter did not specifically address the subject of the \$16,000 in winnings. It stated the commission regretted the investigation did not render the result Lockett was seeking. The letter was dated July 1.

That was almost a month after The Times first inquired with the gaming commission about casino complaints. It's the same day the commission

responded to The Times public records request with the 37 complaints from 2009 and seven more from 2010.

### **COMPLAINTS COMPARATIVELY FEW**

The Northwest Indiana boats appear to have few written complaints filed, when compared to the number of complaints filed in other state gaming jurisdictions.

For example, total casino revenue in all of Illinois only slightly exceeds that of the five Northwest Indiana boats, yet the Illinois Gaming Board handled about three times as many written complaints, according to its records.

Similarly, Colorado's Division of Gaming, which oversees gaming establishments with about three-fifths the total take of Northwest Indiana's five boats, handled more than 10 times as many written complaints. Yelton said if Indiana has a small number of written complaints it must be due to the good job casinos and gaming agents are doing on the boats.

"Could it be better?" Yelton said. "We could try to do better. But we won't do much better."

Horseshoe Casino Vice President and General Manager Dan Nita pointed out the 10 written complaints filed against his casino in 2009 represented only a fraction of 1 percent of the 5.5 million customers who patronize the gaming boat in any one year.

He acknowledged there are complaints filed against his casino that would be reasonable from a patron's perspective, at least before all the facts are explained to them.

But Nita said he had no idea why the gaming commission had not answered four of the 10 written complaints filed against his casino in 2009.

Ameristar Casino Vice President and General Manager Pete Savage made the same point as Nita, saying the four written complaints lodged against his casino represent just a tiny fraction of the 3.7 million guests streaming through it every year.

"Our goal is to give our guests the best experience possible, and we try to treat everyone with dignity and respect," Savage said.

Blue Chip Casino did not respond to a request for comment. The Indiana Gaming Commission's lack of response to written complaints usually strikes gamblers as the last injustice in what they feel is a long line starting with when they first raised an issue with a casino worker or floor supervisor.

For Lockett, her love of her occasional gambling excursions with friend Barber had her back at the slots at Majestic Star on May 29. She already had plunked \$300 into the spinning machines but thought she might be about to go on a roll when she won a total of 35 bonus spins, which can pay multiple winnings.

But then both a casino attendant and security guard told her the entire row of machines had to be shut down. They ordered her to cash out. Lockett admits to getting somewhat worked up, but she didn't think it was right when she was threatened with arrest both by casino security and gaming commission agents.

They rejected her plea to file another complaint, and she said they ejected her from the casino. She later e-mailed a written complaint to the gaming commission. In late July, she received a response letter that was dated July 1.

It stated Majestic Star was making the daily drop of cash from machines and that no patrons can be present during the drop. The letter stated the casino did not violate any Indiana gaming laws or rules by ordering her to cash out.

"My question is what rights do we have?" Lockett said. "What can we do? We customers, we come and we pay all this money into the boat. And we do it of our own free will. But the thing is if you win, why can't you get paid?"

### **Best Ongoing News Coverage/Category 3**

#### **Bid process, IU's oversight of lab raises questions, doubts**

#### **Tim Evans & Mark Alesia The Indianapolis Star**

When told he had one day to bid on a contract worth about \$2 million, Hansueli Ryser suddenly grew concerned about how Indiana's Department of Toxicology was doing business with taxpayer money.

Ryser, vice president of Draeger Safety Diagnostics, had been to Indianapolis three times to demonstrate his breath-alcohol testing product.

But with just one day to bid, he recalled telling his colleagues, "Something is not good – and not right."

Ryser, who typically had been given three to six weeks to prepare bids that large, said Indiana's process was "different than anything I've seen in 30 years in this business."

The contract ended up going to the only other company that submitted a bid in a process that former toxicology Director Michael Wagner – who resigned in May – controlled unchallenged, an *Indianapolis Star* investigation found.

The way in which Wagner spent taxpayer money appears headed toward an investigation by the state's inspector general.

But whether anything illegal happened, the process raises questions about leadership and oversight by the Indiana University School of Medicine, which by law runs the Toxicology Department, whose main responsibilities are the testing of blood samples in drunken-driving cases and the training of police on breath-alcohol testing equipment.

It also is more evidence for those who want the lab taken away from IU, which was the recent recommendation by an “assessment team” that included two state legislators and a former judge.

Although IU says it is making progress to improve the toxicology lab, significant damage has been done, prosecutors say. The Toxicology Department has frustrated prosecutors with slow turnarounds on blood test results, little or no communication and a lack of training for breath-test operators.

“Things have never been worse,” Steve Johnson, executive director of the Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council, said in a March meeting of the Governor’s Council on Impaired and Dangerous Driving.

Taxpayers, meanwhile, continue in effect to pay for Wagner’s purchase. The breath analysis machines bought from the winning bidder -- Intoximeters -- were placed in storage unused in October and won’t begin to be implemented for at least five more months. They won’t be in full use for at least a year.

Until then, it costs the state \$670 a month to store them.

Taxpayers also continue to pay for Wagner. Though he resigned as head of the Toxicology Department, he remains on IU’s faculty. An IU spokeswoman said she didn’t know whether his salary of \$155,000 changed after the resignation.

Taxpayers also are covering the services of former Marion County Prosecutor and Public Safety Director Scott Newman, hired by IU as a consultant to help implement the machines Wagner bought.

The machines are used at police stations to take readings for use in court, as opposed to breath tests administered in the field.

Adopting new machines requires changes in police protocol that must be written into the administrative code. Wagner apparently hadn’t started that process. There is also the need to train operators statewide on the new machines.

Prosecutors and the Toxicology Department also can expect to spend time fighting challenges from defense attorneys, who will try to attack the new machines from every angle. That’s especially likely in light of Wagner’s resignation.

Newman said that “in hindsight, there were better ways” to do the bidding. But the result was Indiana getting “some good equipment, the next generation of 10 or 12 years’ worth of equipment that we are actively implementing,” configured for the needs of police and prosecutors.

Johnson said there were no performance issues with the previous supplier, National Patent Analytical Systems. He said old machines simply needed to be replaced.

Prosecutors were “never involved in the testing, bidding or selection of the new equipment,” Johnson said.

Wagner, who didn’t respond to repeated requests for an interview, wanted machines that employ “dual technology” -- that is, they use two methods of analyzing samples instead of one.

Newman said such machines are “considered the best practice by many.”

Johnson, however, said it is unclear whether they are superior to other models, and that depending on the protocol, they can be more work for police.

At the time of the bidding, January 2009, only two companies made dual technology machines: Intoximeters and Draeger.

Yet the bid specifications sent only to them didn’t include the dual technology requirement. Indeed, the requirements were remarkably basic.

“Any one of two or three dozen instruments would have met the criteria on that bid,” said John Fusco, president of National Patent Analytical Systems.

Even Newman said a “device that’s in the doorway of some bar” would have qualified.

“The better practice,” he said, “is to include all relevant specifications that are going to guide your analysis. Does that always happen? No.”

### **Quick turnaround**

Another questionable aspect of the bid process was the time allowed for a response. Intoximeters and Draeger both had one day.

Craig Holman, a government affairs lobbyist specializing in government contracting for consumer advocacy group Public Citizen, called the one-day bid deadline “startling” and “ripe for procurement fraud.”

Neither Newman nor IU spokeswoman Pamela Perry had an explanation for the one-day deadline. Wagner’s predecessor as toxicology director, Peter Method, tested various equipment but did not make a recommendation. He passed his information on to Wagner. It’s unclear whether Wagner did any testing.

Robert Halter, executive director of IU’s office of procurement, said bid deadlines would normally be longer, but Wagner had told his office both companies were “prequalified” and “prepared to respond.”

Draeger's bid, however, specifically notes "the short deadline for responding" as the reason it couldn't provide a price for one of the 10 items in the bid.

State Sen. Thomas Wyss, R-Fort Wayne, a member of the assessment team, said the selection and purchase process lacked transparency.

"The process may have been irregular," Wyss said. "Let's hope that was due to a lack of knowledge and not for other reasons."

Asked whether he suspects inappropriate or illegal activity, Newman said: "I don't think that's for us to judge. I think that's why we're preparing the information to turn over to the inspector general, as was requested by the assessment team."

Newman said people above and below Wagner had to rely on his expertise in a highly specialized area. State law dictated that the decision was Wagner's.

But IU agrees that an outside advisory panel of experts, as is used by Marion

County's crime lab, should be created and "probably would have flagged some of the issues that have come up," Newman said.

Such a panel was recommended two years ago for the Toxicology Department by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. But it wasn't created.

This year's assessment team reiterated that recommendation, and Newman said he is working to create the panel.

### **Accountability question**

If anyone should have stepped in, it would have been Michael Vasko, Wagner's supervisor, who makes \$176,328 as chairman of the IU School of Medicine's Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology.

But the assessment team's report portrayed Vasko as all but absent from his supervisory responsibility for the Department of Toxicology.

"He was unable to answer most of the questions" from the assessment team "and stated his surprise to learn that there were any problems," the report said.

In 2008, Vasko made a presentation to NHTSA, but in his meeting with the 2010 assessment team, he "had no answers" as to why IU had failed to follow up on the NHTSA recommendations. Vasko did not respond to interview requests.

IU medical school Dean D. Craig Brater said he had "the utmost confidence in Dr. Vasko's leadership ability" and that Vasko "understands the importance of fixing the problems." And one of those problems clearly is making the new equipment operational.

But the problem goes beyond the storage cost, the rewriting of codes, the training of operators, potential challenges by defense attorneys and concerns over the bidding process.

There is another concern: The machines' effectiveness can dwindle when they're not being used.

Said Rankine Forrester, CEO of Intoximeters: "To say time has no effect would be disingenuous."

But the state did catch one break. Intoximeters agreed to change the start of its two-year warranty on the machines from the invoice date to July 1, 2010.

## **Best General Commentary/Category 4**

### **Shaken baby, shaken daddy**

**Jerry Davich**

**Post-Tribune (Merrillville)**

It was a lifetime ago. My two kids, now ages 26 and 27, were still in diapers. A baby and a toddler at the time.

One of them, I forget which, would not stop crying one day. Bawling. Wailing. Screaming. On and on. It seemed like hours. I'm sure it wasn't. It didn't matter. I was alone. I was frustrated. Very frustrated.

I remember picking them up – angrily – from their living room playpen and bolting into a bedroom, where I plopped them into their crib – roughly.

Then I slammed the door and tried to ignore their yelps. It didn't stop. I went back into the bedroom. I spanked them. I yelled.

Finally, I left the room, cranked up the living room stereo and tried to drown out the whimpering. In time, it worked. They cried themselves to sleep, their little blankie moist from tears. I remember. I checked.

This may have happened more than once. I don't recall. I don't want to, really.

Did I shake the dickens out of them? No. Was I violent? No.

Nothing bad happened. 911 wasn't called. They're healthy and fine today.

But I sometimes wasn't sensitive enough, caring enough, loving enough. I could have rocked them to sleep in a fraction of the time it took for them to cry themselves to sleep.

But I was young. Stupid. With the patience of a young, stupid man pretending to be a parent.

I write this – and I remember this again – after reading about 24-year-old David Steven Golub of Highland. Last week, he was charged with battering his girlfriend’s toddler to death.

Police say Golub severely shook and threw 19-month-old Derek Hansen, who died afterward at a Chicago hospital. Little Derek obviously frustrated Golub, prompting him to shake the child and toss him to his death, according to police.

Golub provided conflicting accounts of actually what happened. First saying the boy fell from a love seat. Then saying he twirled the boy playfully from his ankles and he accidentally hit his head on an entertainment center.

Golub called the boy’s death an accident. Police call it a Class A felony murder. I call it a damn shame, because I’ve written a similar column before, merely changing the names and dates of the young killer and much younger victim.

But this column isn’t about Golub, who’s likely heading to prison. Little Derek is dead.

And this isn’t about myself. My kids are OK today, even flourishing in their lives.

No, this column is about all those other fathers, parents and ill-advised caregivers – even those part-time “it’s just for a couple of hours” baby sitters – who are watching little children today. Right now. At this very moment.

Are most of them baby killers with malice in their heart? No.

But too many are simply not prepared – emotionally, physically, psychologically – to care for a baby or a child. Look at them, some can’t take care of themselves.

If anything, today’s column can be a wake-up call to those young mothers who wrongly entrust their child to the care of young caregivers.

I’m not making excuses for them. Or myself. I’m just saying there are more unprepared parents out there than we would like to admit. Or confess to. I’m not saying you have to announce it to the world, or to your kids, or to your mate. But at least tell yourself the truth. And next time, think twice before you pretend to be a parent. I wish I did.

Thanks for reading

### **Thank you**

Regrettably, I forgot to add these two simple words to my Monday column regarding all the column ideas I get from readers.

Whether those ideas are crazy or credible, wacky or wise, compelling or forgettable, I still appreciate you taking the time to contact me.

I also appreciate you reading my column on a regular basis even though we may disagree on its content and perspective.

By the way, that column also prompted a lot of readers to pitch me their own tips, ideas and suggestions, and I’m sorting through them all.

If I haven’t yet replied to you, I will soon. And thanks again, for taking part in this ongoing dialogue I call a newspaper column.

Lastly, I also post similar column “blurbs” on my blog, which offers readers a forum to join a similar conversation with each other, as well as my Facebook and Twitter pages.

Visit my blog at <http://blogs.post-trib.com/davich/>, and find my Facebook at [jerry.davich](#), and Twitter at [@jrdavich](#).

I’m nothing if not accessible.

## **Best Editorial Writer/Category 5**

### **Bloomington tries to block I-69**

#### **Chuck Leach**

#### **Evansville Courier & Press**

OK guys, if you are going to try and prevent the state from running Interstate 69 through the Bloomington area, then you are going to have to give back the state’s university – you can’t have one and not the other.

We’re kidding, of course, but this seems an appropriate response to the latest antics by the clowns who do transportation planning in Bloomington.

Once again, the Bloomington/Monroe County Metropolitan Planning organization has excluded Interstate 69 from its annual transportation plan. It is a document required by the Federal Highway Administration.

Of course, I-69 is well along on its construction between Evansville and Crane and will soon be bearing down on Bloomington. For the highway to pass through the Bloomington area, it must be a part of that city’s transportation plan.

They tried this same stunt back in 2009, only to be threatened by the Indiana Department of Transportation, which suggested that the state might withhold as much as \$32.4 million in highway funds Bloomington was counting on for other work.

That was about the same time that the planning group and the Bloomington City Council was attempting to block the highway by re--fusing to give its permission for the state to buy a house along the route.

The owner wanted to sell and the state needed to buy, but the Bloomington officials refused, at first. It was only after the state threatened to withhold money that Bloomington gave in and put I-69 in its transportation plan.

The group included I-69 in its plan last year, but is back to the same old games again, voting May 13 to take it out.

According to The Associated Press, Bloomington City Council member Andy Ruff, also a member of the planning group, said Monroe County residents have unresolved questions on the road's funding, the location of interchanges and the environment.

(Don't forget, Indiana conducted one of the most comprehensive environmental studies ever done anywhere before launching this vital project.)

There's more: Ruff said, according to The Bloomington Herald Times, "There comes a time when you stand up to a bully. It is time to stand up for ourselves."

Readers of the Courier & Press should take note: When Ruff talks about "the bully," he is talking about the people of Southwestern Indiana who want and need this highway.

He is talking about Indiana University students and their parents who must worry each time they make the trip to Bloomington on narrow, curvy roads they share with coal

trucks and slow-moving farm equipment.

He is talking about the folks in Petersburg and Washington who may need to see a medical specialist in Indianapolis and are concerned about getting there safely.

He is talking about high school band members from Newburgh or Evansville who travel by bus for competitions in Indianapolis and hope to make it there without accident.

And yes, there are some from the Evansville area who may just want to see an IU basketball game and want to get there on time. These taxpayers and residents of Southwestern Indiana are the bullies that Ruff is talking about.

Remember this: INDOT is building Interstate 69 at the request of people who for more than 50 years pleaded for a modern highway to Bloomington and Indianapolis.

But even now, Ruff and his gang would deny them safe, timely access to a state university in Bloomington and to the state capital. It's like talking to an ivy-covered brick wall.

In the meantime, the first three sections of the highway between Evansville and Crane are under construction. The fourth section is the one threatened by Bloomington.

INDOT officials say they will take their time and consider their options. That's wise, as long as INDOT continues the rapid construction pace set by Gov. Mitch

Daniels. In other words, don't stop now.

## **Best Business/Economic News Coverage/Category 6**

### **Rebuilding a lifetime's work**

**Thomas B. Langhorne**

**& Susan Orr**

**Evansville Courier & Press**

It's not the official last day of production at Whirlpool Corp.'s U.S. 41 plant, June 25, 2010, that Mary Jane Brust remembers about the end of her 19-year career with the company.

It's the day in August 2009 when she learned it was over for her and 1,200 other hourly and salaried workers at the Evansville refrigerator plant.

The news that they would all lose their jobs in a few months was a crushing blow.

"I thought to myself, 'The world's going to come to an end,' " Brust said.

Brust vividly remembers the stir that went through the crowd as Whirlpool officials notified hundreds of first-shift production workers at the 1.7-million-square-foot factory.

Some wept. Others stood silently, seemingly dumb-founded by the news and the surprise with which it came. Angry muttering was heard.

"I thought Whirlpool was going to be there forever. I think most people thought that," says Brust, a 61-year-old Evansville resident.

As Whirlpool officials went on about global economic conditions, a decline in demand for freezer-topped refrigerators and the decision to move production to Mexico, Brust walked away.

It was hard to imagine there would be better days ahead for the displaced Whirlpool workers. Time to heal. From the ashes, new conceptions of the future emerged.

On Thursday, with the one-year anniversary of Whirlpool's production shutdown bearing down fast, Brust and a handful of her former co-workers met at Denny's restaurant at U.S. 41 and Lynch Road.

Tom Wagner, a Whirlpool veteran of more than 42 years, had a relatively soft landing.

Wagner, 61, an Evansville resident, had planned to retire when he turns 63 in September 2012.

"It just came a little earlier," he joked.

Wagner can make jokes. His seniority — he had worked in the U.S. 41 plant since 1986, working before that in the company's plant at Morgan Avenue and Read Street — served him well.

When the plant closed, Wagner drew the maximum 26 weeks of severance pay. He was entitled to that by virtue of having worked at Whirlpool for more than 26 years. He also received unemployment. The two income sources came to roughly what Wagner was paid at the plant's polystyrene department.

This year, Wagner is in the first year of collecting his pension — \$32.50 for every year he worked for the company, every month for the rest of his life. He said that amount is about half what he made before the plant closed.

For the next few years Wagner and his wife, Sue, will buy their health insurance through Whirlpool's group policy, with the company paying part of the costs from accounts paid into by Whirlpool from 2000 until the plant closed. That coverage will last until the couple exhausts their accounts.

After he turns 62, Wagner plans to begin collecting Social Security, which he estimates will take him close to 80 percent of what he had been making at Whirlpool. Sue Wagner continues to work as a receptionist in a doctor's office.

The Wagners plan to take some trips this summer. Tom Wagner said he might volunteer for something or seek out a part-time job this winter. There is no urgency.

For the time being, he enjoys fishing at Uniontown Dam and Kentucky Lake at Uniontown and Murray, Ky., respectively.

"If there were any lucky ones, I was one of the lucky ones," Wagner said.

Less lucky were the estimated 200 to 300 Whirlpool employees who had met the mandatory five years to be vested in the company's pension plan — but who had not reached the minimum age of 55 to start collecting — when the plant closed.

Those workers also cannot purchase retirement health insurance in Whirlpool's group policy, forcing them to buy more expensive individual health insurance or COBRA if they don't have jobs that offer coverage.

"A lot of the workers who weren't 55 yet are just doing without," said Darrell Collins, former president of the International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers-Communications Workers of America Local 808, which represented hourly Whirlpool employees.

"The average age in the plant was 52½, and I would say about three-quarters of the workers were vested," Collins said.

Being on the wrong side of that equation can produce a disagreeable brew of anger, suspicion and resentment.

Josh Johnston, a 10-year employee who was 30 when the Evansville plant closed, sees the closing as an unpatriotic act.

Johnston, who was unemployed for more than a year after the first wave of employee departures on March 26, 2010, speaks of a stigma he said is attached to former Whirlpool employees.

"No one would hire me because of Whirlpool," said Johnston, who finally landed a job as a forklift driver and warehouse worker at a company in Henderson, Ky. "A bunch of us has heard that quite a bit. (Potential employers) thought we'd been making too much money at Whirlpool for the job we were doing. It's not true. One of them basically said that (former) Whirlpool employees couldn't pass a drug test."

Johnston said he angrily offered to bet \$100 right then and there that he could pass any drug test the employer wanted to administer.

"It made me really mad," he said. "I don't know where they get these ideas from."

Johnston, an Evansville resident, also doesn't buy Whirlpool's explanations about the production shutdown.

"We ain't got that many jobs in the U.S. anymore," he said. "They're just after the money, that's all there is to it."

John Walker, a former assembly line worker, moved away from his wife, Karen, and 16-year-old son in Newburgh to take a job in Chicago.

Walker, 48, had not invested years and his hopes for a secure future into a career at Whirlpool. In fact, he says he was hired on the understanding his services would be needed for just six months.

But unemployment was no less a catastrophic event for Walker.

He says Ford Motor Co., which laid him off from its Princeton, Ind., parts plant before he landed with Whirlpool in 2009, gave him a new opportunity in a warehouse assembly plant in Chicago.

With no other job offers on the horizon, Walker said, he had to put food on the table. But living in an apartment in Chicago and coming home for weekends every three weeks or so is expensive and demoralizing.

“I had to have health insurance,” he said. “But it’s a hardship, being away from my wife and son.”

With the Walkers unable to sell their home in Newburgh and Karen firmly established in her job, Walker said moving the family to Chicago is not an option. But neither is leaving his job at Ford, which he says offers terrific benefits and pay.

“If I had to do it over again, I wouldn’t have taken this job in Chicago,” he said, his voice catching slightly. “Even without the benefits, I would be happier at home.”

Walker, who will turn 49 in July, sighed heavily.

“Sometimes your family should outweigh what your job pays,” he said.

The Whirlpool closing also scrambled Mary Jane Brust’s future, forcing the former forklift driver to walk away from co-workers she called her “second family” and abandon plans to retire in December 2012, when her house will be paid off.

Brust, who began drawing her pension after the production shutdown, will begin collecting Social Security with a reduced pension in January.

Having gone ahead with a series of minor surgeries she put off, Brust plans to enjoy the summer. In September, she will join her daughter for a week of sightseeing in New York City.

After that, she hopes to get a part-time job cleaning offices. She cleaned offices years ago and enjoyed it.

Brust feels good, ready to work for a paycheck again “until I get tired of it,” she says with a laugh. Life didn’t end for her when Whirlpool shut down.

But the pain of losing her job will never go away — not completely, anyway — even with the advance warning she got on that dark day in August 2009.

“Ten months’ warning ... when it comes to finalization of a job, there’s never enough warning.”

## **Best Short Feature Story/Category 8**

### **Urban cowboys**

**Lauri Harvey Keagle**  
**The Times (Munster)**

There are no playgrounds on this city’s West Side.

The sole baseball field offers Little League, but those programs end before the kids reach their teen years. Many of the windows on the homes here are boarded up. There are few shops to walk to, no local restaurants, no after-school jobs.

It’s easy to see why the lure of the streets is so attractive.

But wedged tightly between the Indiana Toll Road and the South Shore commuter rail tracks is an oasis for neighborhood children.

Just northeast of Burr Street and Fifth Avenue sits the T-Ford Performance Horse Ranch, where a truck driver and his postal carrier wife offer horseback riding and rodeo skills classes, charging only whatever local families can pay.

“People say, ‘How do you fix the streets?’ ” said Tim Ford, owner of the ranch and a lifelong West Side resident. “I’m going to start with these kids. This is how we’re going to fix it.”

Ford calls himself a “second-generation cowboy.” The kids who ride with him call him Uncle Tim.

His father, James, started the ranch more than 30 years ago. Ford, 38, credits his dad for keeping him on a positive path.

“All the times trouble came down, people would say, ‘Where was Tim?’ and I was at a ranch, at a rodeo,” he said.

After graduating from West Side High School, Ford went on to truck driving school. He drives a semitrailer overnight and when Ford gets off work, he heads straight for the ranch just down the road from his home to care for his 11 horses.

He’s currently training five boys and one girl in horsemanship.

“I teach them there’s another side other than being in the streets,” he said. “It’s easy to get in trouble, but it’s hard to get out of it. It teaches you responsibility. A horse can’t take care of itself. You’re responsible for a life.”

The kids have to care for the horses and the ranch itself. Ford is strict about making sure school comes first. Grades of C or higher are required, and, if the kids receive a bad grade, they can’t come to the ranch for a week.

“If they don’t do their chores at home or get in trouble at home, they can’t ride here either,” he said. “It’s a joint effort with their parents.”

Ford considers every one of the young people who ride at his ranch his own.

“A lot of the kids call me everyday and not just about things having to do with the horses, about other things at home or at school, too,” he said. “I feel like they’re mine. A lot of guys leave their families and a lot of guys grow up without a father.”

Tiffany Ford, Tim’s wife, speaks with pride about her husband’s influence.

“He teaches the kids what you should expect from a man,” she said. “The boys and the girls need that. ... When you’ve got good men in the lives of young people, it makes a major difference.”

Tiffany, a postal carrier in Crete, grew up in Chicago’s notoriously violent Englewood neighborhood. She met her husband at a local club eight years ago.

“The first night we met, we came out here, and I’ve been here ever since,” she said.

The couple often skip date nights, dinners out and carryout meals, instead putting the money they would have spent into the youth program. The Fords have saved up to help buy horses for the young

people they mentor as well as for a developmentally disabled West Side man who helps out at the ranch.

“This is our life,” Ford said. “We only charge whatever a family can pay, but if a family can’t pay, it’s not going to stop us. We’ll take any donations. Right now we’re going out of our own pocket.”

Recently, the Fords and parents of their riders took the horses out to Broadway and Fifth Avenue in Gary, asking people to give whatever they could. The change the neighbors scraped together

sent the kids to competition.

“I had first, second and third from my ranch in one event,” Ford said. “That was the most proud thing for me.”

Charles Wilson II, a childhood friend, is an instructor at the ranch. After high school, Wilson went away to the service, but he came back to the West Side.

“When I was growing up, everyone was gang banging,” Wilson said. “It was all gangs, shooting, negative stuff.”

When he returned from the military, Wilson was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma at age 27. He’s been in remission for nearly 10 years.

“God gave me a second chance in life, so I know I can give someone else a chance,” he said. “That’s what this is about.”

‘I’M NOT TURNING BACK’

Nine years ago, Ford called Keilani Jackson and told her to bring her then 5-year-old son, Landrick, outside.

“Tim came down the alley on one of the horses,” Jackson said. “My son’s eyes got about this big and he’s been into it ever since. He lives, eats, breathes it.”

Now 14, Landrick is entering his freshman year at Thea Bowman Leadership Academy. After the boy’s first horse died, the Fords helped his mother buy him Sweet and Sassy, a 2-year-old mare. At

first, Landrick didn’t like the animal.

“I told him if you take your time, it’ll be a beautiful horse,” Ford said.

The boy and the horse began to bond and they started winning competitions. After taking top honors in his age group at a rodeo, Landrick turned to Ford with a smile and said, “Hey Tim. She’s pretty,

isn’t she?”

Ford knew then that the boy understood what he’d been trying to teach him.

“It’s a lot of work,” Landrick said while brushing his horse’s tail. “You have to take a lot of care of them, but you take care of them, they’ll take care of you.”

The West Side teen knows all too well how he could be spending his time.

“There’s a lot of kids not really doing anything interactive or educational, just playing in the

streets, getting hurt with gangs and stuff,” Landrick said. “With this, you can take the horses places, go to other states and it’s fun.”

His mother says the ranch is a blessing.

“I cry every time I see them ride,” Jackson said. “I never worry about my son when he’s here. This is his stomping ground.”

Landrick says definitively that he will go to veterinary school in Texas after he graduates from high school and eventually buy a ranch there or in Oklahoma.

Nearby, West Side kids dressed in plaid shirts, cowboy hats and blue jeans held up by belts secured with huge buckles tend to their horses. Country music blares over the public address system

into the ring, competing with the sounds of semis racing by on the Indiana Toll Road, South Shore trains rolling down the tracks and, overhead, jets en route to Chicago's Midway Airport.

The sounds are good for the horses.

"When we take them on the highway to competitions, nothing bothers them," he said.

Ford cuts the music to take the microphone and directs the kids in practicing for an upcoming competition. Inside the pen, the kids cheer each other on as their teammates race around barrels on

sprinting horses, handing off batons as they round corners in a flag race.

Kirsten Goodwin, 17, of Highland, is secretary for the group and has been riding since she was 4.

"I consider myself really lucky to be a part of something like this," she said. "I've seen some of my friends make wrong decisions because they have idle time. I know a lot of people who don't have other things to turn to. They might not always make good choices, but they aren't given the same opportunities."

Goodwin said Ford, who is friends with her father, is "like an uncle."

"He's always really helpful and he pushes us to do our best," she said. "He wants us to succeed or make a career out of it."

Goodwin wants to go to Purdue University to study meteorology. She plans to be on the equestrian team.

For the Fords, the self-confidence of the kids in their plans for the future makes the sacrifices they are making worthwhile.

"When they do succeed, you can't put a price tag on that," Tiffany said.

Her husband agrees.

"This is a good life for me, and I'm not turning back," Ford said.

## **Best Profile Feature/Category 9**

### **'My son is a miracle'**

**Jerry Davich**

**Post-Tribune (Merrillville)**

DaiJohn Thames lowered his head and raised his hands toward heaven.

The 17-year-old believer, dressed in a dapper suit on this Palm Sunday, listened intently to the sermon from the front pew of Faith Tabernacle Church of God in Christ.

DaiJohn always sits up front alongside the "mothers" of the congregation, to be closer to the pastor, who is his father, and closer to Jesus and his father.

"DaiJohn is our walking testimonial," said Syreeda Portis, one of the evangelists at the church as she pins tiny palm crosses on church members. "DaiJohn's faith never wavered, and we all pray for him again and again."

The small, white, modest church is nestled amid abandoned buildings, boarded up homes, and littered side streets in Gary, just one block off Broadway.

Bars bolted to the church's windows keep Satan out, but God seems to have no problem getting inside.

Here, church members insist, God performed a miracle. That miracle is DaiJohn.

"We have some miracles in the house!" wails one of the mothers, Kathy Woodley, while sermonizing from behind the lectern. "Can we give Jesus some praise?" I say, can we give Jesus some praise?"

"Amen!" one woman yells out from the front of the church.

"Yes, Lord!" another woman bursts from the back.

"Hallelujah!" cries Woodley, as a church member offers her a white hanky for her tears of joy.

DaiJohn, whose nickname is "Mister" for his old soul, waves his hands back and forth while joining the congregation in a gospel hymn, accompanied only by a Hammond organ, a drum set and centuries of rehearsal.

"Yes, Jesus was crucified," Woodley said passionately, her voice dripping in conviction, "but that's not how the story ends."

DaiJohn was also issued a possible death sentence last year, but that's not how his story ends either.

He, too, experienced a resurrection of sorts, and I'll let you decide today, on Easter, if it was modern medicine or a modern miracle at work.

## **Kidney failure and ... cancer?**

DaiJohn has always had a history of health problems, from an inoperable brain cyst as a toddler to high blood pressure and seizures as a boy to kidney problems as a teen.

But his situation worsened when his kidneys completely gave out in 2009. He was rushed to the emergency room where his parents were told his system was shutting down.

“End stage renal failure,” explained his mother, Loretta Hearne-Thames, during my visit to their Gary home. “DaiJohn had to go on kidney dialysis every day for eight hours a day.”

DaiJohn was admitted into the intensive care unit of the Comer Children’s Hospital at the University of Chicago. There, he has since become a familiar and friendly face to doctors, nurses and other patients.

“DaiJohn is a wonderful patient to work with,” said Dr. Charles Rubin, associate professor of pediatric hematology/oncology. “He is very respectful toward all of his nurses and doctors, despite the stress of his condition. He is wonderfully polite.”

But his politeness, warm smile and kind eyes didn’t help find him a new kidney, despite the countless prayers from his family and fellow church members.

“Please, Lord, find us a kidney for my boy, find us a kidney for my Mister,” his mother prayed over and over.

The months peeled away and Loretta, an evangelist at her church, got more worried than ever for her son.

“Send me a sign, God,” she prayed in early February 2010. “I need a sign.”

## **Best In-Depth Feature or Feature Package/Category 10**

### **Clarence and the journalist Virginia Black South Bend Tribune**

Clarence has closed his eyes again.

His dry lips are trembling, although he insists he’s not in pain. His chest is rising and falling with the effort of pulling air into his lungs, lying in his bed, where Clarence spends most of his time now.

It is mid-January, and Clarence Hardin Jr. is dying.

“I’m just getting ready to die,” he tells me, opening his eyes.

I hesitate. “What do your doctors say?” I ask.

“That I have cancer,” he says. “They just say, ‘Prepare to die.’ ”

For a moment, only the sound of the heating register running full blast next to his bed fills the air. I know he’s right. I also know he’s not a man to take comfort in a religion.

So I say, “Remember when I met you, a long time ago?”

He smiles and nods.

“I asked you then, ‘How do you want people to remember you?’ Do you remember what you told me?”

He shakes his head. I move closer and place my hand over his.

“You said, ‘I don’t want anybody to remember me,’ ” I say. “But a lot of people will remember you. And I’ll remember you.”

He smiles.

“I know,” he says. “Thank you.”

## **A reporter’s curiosity**

Several mornings while driving to work downtown in December 2001, I spotted a man walking slowly down a sidewalk, blankets draped over his head.

When I caught up with him on the sidewalk, I explained who I was and asked whether he'd mind talking with me.

Sure, he said – after he bought his cigarettes.

So I found myself in the lobby of the gas station at the corner of Lafayette and LaSalle, asking questions of this bundled-up, bewhiskered man.

He tells me he's 51; he grew up in Kingsford Heights, in LaPorte County; he's homeless, but he's never been convicted of a crime, doesn't drink, doesn't do drugs. All of these things would later check out as true.

He's disabled, he said. I asked whether his leg, which he clearly favored as he walked, was the reason.

No, he said: "I've got the kind of stress that you die from."

I pressed this point a bit. "But if you've had this stress for 17 or 18 years," I asked, "some people might say it's not really killing you."

He shook his head: "I know I'm dying from it."

He told me that we could find him nights, when it was cold enough, at Hope Rescue Mission on South Michigan Street. Soon, I would discover: Clarence was a diagnosed schizophrenic, paranoid type.

Because Clarence had worked for years at Whirlpool in LaPorte before his mental illness disabled him, he received a substantial amount of disability money every month – more than \$1,000 at the time – which had been piling up for the several months since his last known address.

A local woman, Rosie, had been helping Clarence here and there, as she could find him in local homeless shelters. And she was willing to help him manage his money, to become his payee, so that he could find a place to live on his own.

You might think it is fairly simple to find a homeless man a home, but you would be wrong.

Clarence signed papers allowing me access to personal information and documents to help him.

But he faced a seemingly never-ending series of obstacles to re-establish his Social Security payments; find an ID to apply for an apartment; resume medications; and so on. Rosie's job did not allow her to miss work during the day.

So if Clarence were to find a place to live in any sort of timely way, we would have to step in.

Journalists are meant to be observers, to document the world and the human condition. I understood that. But to let a man who was homeless purely because of mental illness sleep in the cold because we were worried about maintaining a certain distance, conveying a false objectivity and impartiality, seemed inhumane.

I broached my dilemma to my boss, who thought about it a minute.

"You know that famous Vietnam photo of the little girl burning from napalm?" he finally said. "I always wanted to believe that the photographer shot that photo – and then put down his camera and helped that little girl."

### **After the stories**

In early March 2002, we published a five-part series about Clarence and his schizophrenia, documenting the bureaucracy involved in finding him a place to live, in Robertson's Apartments downtown. The series was called "The Man in the Blankets."

Clarence had told me that he had been married twice and had three children. But he wouldn't discuss those things. "I'm done with all of that," he said.

After the series, a man from Mishawaka called and said he was Clarence's son. He said the family had not known what had happened to his father; would he be willing to see him?

I asked his father. No, Clarence said, unrelenting.

Sadly, I relayed the message.

## **Best Sports Event Coverage/Category 11**

### **Devastating defeat for Irish**

**Tony Krausz**

**The Journal Gazette (Fort Wayne)**

Notre Dame was poised to end a horrible week with a feel-good moment.

But Tulsa cornerback John Flanders snatched that away in the final seconds of the Irish's 28-27 home loss Saturday.

Notre Dame's Tommy Rees, who stepped in at quarterback in the first quarter when Dayne Crist suffered a knee injury, drove the Irish to the Hurricane's 19-yard line with 42 seconds left and Notre Dame trailing by a point.

After a timeout, Rees lofted a pass to the right corner of the end zone for Michael Floyd, but Flanders stepped in for his first interception of the season and a crushing loss for Notre Dame (4-5).

Irish coach Brian Kelly defended going for a touchdown on second-and-8 even though kicker David Ruffer is 18 for 18 on field goals for his career.

“You better get used to it, because that’s the way we are playing,” Kelly said. “If we can get a one-on-one matchup (with Floyd), and we think we can get that accomplished, we are going to call that play again and again.

“We will make that play. We didn’t make it today, but in time, we will make that play.”

The Irish were playing their first game since Declan Sullivan, a 20-year-old junior, died filming practice Wednesday when the lift he was in fell over in strong wind.

Notre Dame and Tulsa players wore helmet decals in the shape of a shamrock with Sullivan’s initials inside.

“It was difficult at times,” Irish linebacker Manti Te’o said of getting ready for the game. “We had to keep digging and refocus.”

Crist was knocked out of the game after he landed awkwardly when he was hit out of bounds at the end of a 29-yard run.

NBC reported during its game broadcast that Crist ruptured the patella tendon in his left knee and that the quarterback’s season is over.

Last year on Halloween, Crist tore the ACL in his right knee.

Rees completed 33 of 54 passes for 334 yards with four touchdowns in place of Crist.

But Rees also threw three interceptions, with two killing drives to end the first half and the final one ending the game.

“(Kelly) told me he was proud of me and proud of the way I played and fought. That helps a lot,” Rees said.

Rees had guided Notre Dame to a 20-12 lead with 8:10 to play in the first half when he connected with Floyd on a 4-yard touchdown.

But Rees’ first interception was returned 66 yards for a touchdown by Tulsa’s Shawn Jackson to cut the Irish’s lead to 20-18, after the Hurricane (5-3) missed the two-point conversion, with 37 seconds to play in the first half.

Irish cornerback Darrin Walls ended the Hurricane’s first drive of the second half when he recovered at fumble at his 19, and Rees drove Notre Dame 81 yards and capped the nine-play drive with a 6-

yard touchdown toss to running back Cierre Wood for a 27-18 lead with 8:47 to play in the third quarter.

Tulsa cut into Notre Dame’s lead with a 59-yard punt return by Damaris Johnson with 4:59 to play in the third, and the Hurricane took its first lead since the opening quarter with a 27-yard field goal from Kevin Fitzpatrick with 3:23 to play.

“It’s certainly about winning football game, first and foremost, but it’s the way our guys played,” Kelly said. “Boy, with everything that was on their plate, they went out and battled their butts off today, and I’m proud of them.”

## **Best Sports News or Feature Coverage/ Category 12**

### **He makes all the difference Mark Lazerus Post-Tribune (Merrillville)**

Angry?

Is that the right word?

Jeff Karras is angry.

Sounds right. Looks right.

Sure seems like the guy’s angry a lot of the time. He’s an old-school, sideline-stomping, facemask-grabbing, eyeball-bulging, neck-vein-throbbing, spittle-flying taskmaster.

He’s a screamer. A drill sergeant. A dictator.

Hell, half the time, he looks like he might just be full-blown crazy.

That’s been Karras’ reputation since his days at Andrean and Clark. And that’s certainly the first impression he gave to his shell-shocked players at quiet, little South Central when he was hired to turn around a lagging, undisciplined football program last February.

“My first impression? I hated him,” says senior receiver Matt Walker. “He was nuts. I never had a coach that yelled like that before.”

That’s what Karras wanted. That fear. The idea was that the fear would eventually lead to respect – always a dicey path – but it had to start with

genuine fear. It was the only way. It was the high school football version of Scared Straight.

South Central's football team had turned into a country club, with talented players skipping workouts, mouthing off to coaches and giving half-hearted efforts. These were good football players, but these were lousy teammates.

The flesh was willing, but the spirit was weak.

"If you were good last year, you could do whatever you wanted," Walker says. "We were always right. We could say whatever we wanted and we could do whatever we wanted with the old coaches. We all had bad attitudes."

Perhaps none as bad as senior Devin Wiltse, a talented running back who estimates he quit the team five times last season.

He also was thrown off two times. It was all a show. A "joke," as Wiltse puts it. He got to skip a practice, then sat through a lengthy lecture about commitment and priorities and maturity and blah blah blah, then was right back on the team every time.

Punishments never stuck. During a running back drill last year, assistant coach Gary Biggs— unhappy with the effort Wiltse was giving— ordered him to run a lap.

Wiltse, as he always did, had a smart comment to make before running his lap. When he got back from his lap, head coach Jud Tolmen told him he was off the team.

"They brought me back the next day," Wiltse says with a laugh. "I just had a bad attitude. I always had a remark for everything. I was pretty much the cancer of the team last year."

The Satellites lost their first five games en route to a 3-7 season, their seventh losing campaign in the previous eight seasons.

Little wonder, too. "Nobody took it seriously," Wiltse says. Then came Karras. Fire-breathing, F-bomb-dropping Karras. The Karras who played for no-nonsense Don Howell at Hobart.

Who took Andrean to the 2001 state championship game.

Who clearly meant business.

Suddenly, the country club was a dictatorship. No job—no ego, no eardrum, no facemask— was safe.

"The administration warned me there was a little bit of a discipline problem," Karras says. "They asked how I'd handle that, if some guys didn't want to practice hard. I said, 'Well, I'll bench them.' They asked, 'What if the next guy's a freshman?' I said, 'Well, that's fine, too.' I blast everybody equally. I don't care if it's the youngest freshman or the biggest stud on the team. If you're not doing what you're supposed to, I'm going to blast you."

And in case anyone doubted that, Karras made his point early and often. During two-a-days, he once threw the entire freshman team off the field in the middle of practice, because he wasn't satisfied with its performance as a scout team.

"If you need to call someone, here's my phone," he screamed with his arm outstretched, as the bewildered ninthgraders started to trudge off the field in disbelief. "It was crazy," Walker says.

Karras routinely removed players from the field for unsatisfactory effort. He regularly blurred the line between scare tactics and inspiration. "The first time he yelled at me..." senior lineman D.J. Alm says wistfully, briefly getting lost in thought and smirking to himself. "I missed a block in the Knox scrimmage, and (quarterback Bryant Hoover) got sacked.

Coach is like, 'What was that D.J.?' I was like, 'Oh, I messed up.' He just comes up and grabs me by the facemask and it was like he was trying to get inside the facemask with me and he's just screaming at me. But it made me want to come back the next play and try to go 10 times harder. You're like, 'OK, now I've got to go out there and take someone's head off so I can get off his radar.' "

Karras even benched his veteran starting quarterback, Bryant Hoover, for the start of the Greater South Shore Conference opener against Bishop Noll, in favor of a freshman.

"He didn't need to be benched, necessarily, but I thought he needed a little fire put under his butt," Karras says. "He came in the second (quarter) and exploded for like 30 points."

Everything had changed. For the scarier, perhaps, but for the better. Immediately.

"We took him seriously," Wiltse says. "Hard not to."

Disliked?

Is that the right way to describe Karras? No, that's not it.

He's actually quite an affable guy. Quick-witted, funny, refreshingly open and honest.

Perfectly calm and composed as long as he's not near a football field. His players love him, too. Well, now, they do. Took a little while at first, of course.

Controversial? Divisive? Nah.

Too strong. Too melodramatic. Out of place? Yeah, that's it. Jeff Karras is out of place. That works. He doesn't fit the mold. You picture a high

school football practice in a rural setting such as Union Mills—a couple dozen undersized kids pushing around a blocking sled on a dusty swath of what used to be grass, silhouetted against endless, browned stalks of corn—and you imagine a grandfatherly coach.

A wily sort, with decades of experience, who puts his arm around a kid's shoulder and doles out wisdom in little countrified sound bites. Golly, gee. Gosh dang it. Madefor- TV stuff. Karras?

You can picture him at Griffith. Hobart, perhaps. A Duneland Conference school, even. Somewhere where football is all-encompassing, and a coach is revered and respected like a king. Untouchable.

Frankly, the very idea of Karras coming to South Central back in February seemed, well, odd.

“We don't think so,” retorts South Central athletic director Chad Haschel, who was in on the interview and selection process. “Being the football coach here is just as big and just as important as being the football coach at Ben Davis or Penn. It's just as important to our community as it is to theirs. We take it just as seriously. We never go into an interview thinking that we're going to settle for a coach because we're just a little 1A school. Being the football coach here is as big a deal as anywhere else.”

And so, everyone in town has an opinion. Poke your head into the Satellite Inn late on a Friday night, and half the patrons will tell you Karras is a genius and a savior—a guy who took an undisciplined 3-7 team that returned nearly intact, and turned it into a 7-2 team that's a genuine contender for the school's first sectional championship.

The other half?

They'll tell you he's a monster and an embarrassment—a guy that brow-beats their kids, taunts opposing fans, and reflects poorly on a tight-knit, wholesome community.

“The whole town thinks they're perfect, so they complain about all the cussing,” Hoover says. “It's stupid.” It's gotten to the point that when you dial South Central High School, there might as well just be a prompt: “Press 1 to complain about Coach Karras.”

“There's rumors all about,” Karras says. “I hear rumors I'm going to quit after one year. People wonder if they're going to let me come back. I'm like, ‘Let me?’ It's just funny to me. I think change sometimes is hard. That's a big change from 3-7 last year to 7-2 this year. And there'll be some hurt feelings along the way. My heart's in the right place. We're successful, the guys are having fun, they're learning how to be leaders and maybe that'll carry on to later in life. I'm sorry if I've hurt a couple feelings along the way.”

But not everybody's. When they see their kids working harder, staying focused and winning games with second-half surges, the parents of those country club sorts from last year sing Karras' praises.

“The younger kids, yeah, some of their parents have a problem with it,” Wiltse says. “But our parents think we needed it. And it's pretty obvious we did.”

Tired? Does that sum it up? Nah, not strong enough. Worn out? Closer.

Exhausted? Jeff Karras is exhausted. Close enough. There might not be an adjective that adequately describes how fatigued Karras is.

Besides the fact that he was bored as an offensive coordinator at Rich South in Illinois, Karras took this job because he doesn't believe in burning out kids in the summer. Because he'd rather be a beach bum than spend his entire summer at football practice.

Because he thinks kids should be kids and should have a full weekend, and not have to report to school on Saturdays, even during the season. By taking over his own team again—something he hadn't done since he coached Clark in 2002—he could run a team on his terms.

On his schedule. But he's still tired. So unbelievably tired. You can see it in his eyes. Hear it in his voice. He lives in Miller. He works in Richton Park, Ill. He coaches in Union Mills. That's about 105 miles a day. He doesn't even get to practice until around 4 p.m.—assistant coach Mel Hay works with the defense while Karras makes the 75-minute commute from Rich South.

He leaves his house at the crack of dawn. He gets home well after dusk. And football's hardly his No. 1 priority. He has an autistic son. His father, Ted Sr.—the former lineman who played on the 1963 world champion Chicago Bears, whose playbook Jeff uses at South Central (the too-young-to-know-better players think it's the '85 Bears' playbook)—is battling Alzheimer's disease, and Jeff's the only son in the area to help.

“I really like it here, I just wish it was closer,” Karras says. “The distance is hard. I'm tired right now. And I'm tired a lot.”

That exhaustion took its biggest toll last Friday night. Karras woke up and looked at his alarm clock, which read 7:15. Karras thought it was oddly dark for 7:15 in the morning. It was 7:15 at night. South Central's game at River Forest already was in the middle of the first quarter. “My son turned the alarm off,” Karras says, shaking his head. He still can't believe nobody came looking for him.

“If I don't show up for a game, call 9-1-1, man, something's wrong,” he says. “That was one of the most horrible feelings, waking up and realizing it was 7:15 and having to call Mel (Hay). Seriously, you talk about a heart-sinking feeling. It's just the absolute worst. But what can I do? I'm tired, I'm trying to take care of my family.”

The Satellites played the entire first half without their head coach. They trailed River Forest 16-14 early in the second quarter by the time Karras arrived from his home in Miller. The Satellites led 30-16 at the half, but were disgusted with their performance.

“Probably the worst half we played all year,” says senior Myles Sims.

So Karras, sheepishly, addressed his team at halftime. There was no screaming this time. No cursing. No ranting or raving. He apologized, and

then the Xs-and- Os football wonk offered up a laughably simple game plan.

“They were upset with the way the game was going, and they were a little confused,” Karras says. “So I just told them to get happy and score three touchdowns so we could put the JV in.” It took 14 minutes to do just that. South Central won 51-16.

“We’re down 16-14 without him, then he shows up and we end up beating them 51-16,” Walker says. “I don’t know how he does it. But he makes us play better. He makes all the difference.”

Happy? Sure, Karras is happy. But that’s not the right word, really. Excited? Nah. No coach ever gets excited – no matter the record, they’re always too busy dwelling on all the minor imperfections rather than everything that’s going right.

Having fun? Hmm... let’s try that.

Jeff Karras is having fun. Perfect. It might appear that Karras is mad —not angry mad, but Mad Hatter mad. It might seem like he’s about to spontaneously combust at all times. It might look like he takes this stuff too seriously. But he doesn’t. And frankly, if you think he does, then you might.

The quintessential Karras moment —the inevitable collision of perception and reality, of passion and fury—came during South Central’s biggest game of the year, a rousing, come-from-behind 23-20 win at home over Whiting. The gritty victory was overshadowed somewhat by a supposed confrontation between Karras and some Whiting fans. He taunted them, people said.

He embarrassed himself, the school and the community, fans alleged. Karras just laughs. He says he was enjoying some good-natured heckling by some good-natured Whiting fans, and was firing back with some good-natured responses.

“We were all having fun,” Karras says. “Then it got carried away.”

Karras says one of his assistants told him that one Whiting fan—a 60- something woman— asked, “How can you deal with him? He’s such an (expletive).”

Karras could only shake his head. “Is it really that bad?” he says with a laugh. “Is it really that big a deal? Is football really that deep? Look, I’ve got a personal life that’s rough. I’m trying to take care of my family. This is almost like a hobby, a fun time. It’s not that heavy, lady. It’s just a game and we’re all going to go home and deal with our regular lives. If and when we lose, I’ll go home and feel good about what we did here, plan the banquet and move on. I’m not living my life through the football field.

“But it’s a great escape, I’ll tell you that.”

So what is Jeff Karras? Is he really that angry? Is he just out of place? Is he just too damn tired? Or is he just a guy trying to escape and have a little fun? Well, he’s all of the above. And he’s also the guy that turned a middling-at-best program filled with malcontents and turned it into a sectional championship contender filled with disciplined, determined young men.

So pick your adjective. It probably fits Jeff Karras. The Satellites? The ones who feared him? Who dreaded him? Who hated him? They’ve got their own description of their enigmatic coach.

“He is,” Hoover says, “the real heart.”

## **Best Sports Columnist/Category 13**

### **Death spotlights young racers**

#### **Bob Kravitz**

#### **The Indianapolis Star**

*Peter (Lenz) passed away early this morning when he was apparently struck by another rider.*

*He passed doing what he loved and had his go-fast face on as he pulled onto the track.*

*The world lost one of its brightest lights today.*

*God bless Peter and the other rider involved. #45 is on another road we can only hope to reach. Miss you kiddo. - Dad*

— A Facebook entry from Michael Lenz, the father of fatally injured 13-year-old motorcycle rider Peter Lenz, posted at 2:02 p.m. Sunday.

In the benumbed hours that followed, people were trying to make sense of the nonsensical.

They asked whether the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course, which the experienced MotoGP riders called bumpy and slick, was too much for these pint-sized prodigies who were competing in an entry-level series that showcases young talent.

They asked whether kids who aren’t old enough to drive legally should be screaming around a perilous course at 125 mph.

They asked whether the race should have been canceled, though at race time, officials were not apprised of Peter’s condition beyond word he’d suffered traumatic injuries.

The questions were understandable and nec-essary but missed the essential point.

To understand how motor-sports competitors think, to get inside minds that most of us can't begin to fathom, consider the favorite quotation on the Facebook page of the young man, Garrett Gerloff, who won the U.S. Grand Prix Riders Union race in which Peter was killed: "Dream as if you'll live forever; live as if you'll die today."

Sure, Peter was 13, and Xavier Zayat, the rider who ran Peter over after he crashed on the warm-up lap, is just 12. (Xavier was not injured.)

But they are old enough to understand that their passions are not without risks. Their parents understand, too.

There were hysterical comments accompanying Sunday's IndyStar.com story about Peter's death, readers screaming "child abuse," yelling that these prepubescent boys shouldn't be allowed to take such chances with their lives.

Here's what they don't get: Young people get hurt, or even worse, playing football, playing hockey, playing any sport.

Some of the most devastating injuries come in cheerleading. In motor sports, virtually every driver at the IndyCar, NASCAR and F-1 levels began driving before they turned 10 years old.

According to the United States Grand Prix Riders Union, this is the first fatality at this level in the nine years of the sanctioning body's existence.

We want to protect them, never let them cross the street, but in the end, we can't expunge the risks, and we snatch away their dreams at our peril.

After the MotoGP race, I cornered the mother of second-place finisher Ben Spies – "just call me 'Momma,' " she said – and asked about watching her son live on the edge week after week.

"He's been doing this since he was 8 years old, and every time the inside of my mouth is bloody from biting my cheek," she said. "But I understand that this is his dream, and I'm sure (Michael Lenz) knew his son wanted this more than anything.

"This was his whole life."

Ben Spies was 14 years old when he lost a good friend in a motorcycle wreck.

"For about two days, I thought, 'What am I doing? Should I be doing this?' " Spies said. "And my mom told me, 'If you want to quit, don't worry about us being in debt. You go ahead and quit and we'll survive. It's your choice.' I kind of think she wanted me to stop.

"But not a day goes by now when I regret staying with it."

Momma Spies tried again four years later.

"Ben had a bad wreck in Daytona when he was 18," she said, "and when we got home, I went to him and he said, 'I can see it in your face. Don't go there. Be my friend and be supportive. I'm not going to stop racing.' "

Before the MotoGP race, former MotoGP champion and current team co-owner and instructor Kevin Schwantz stood inside racer Nicky Hayden's garage, feverishly attempting to reach Michael Lenz on his cell phone.

Just a day earlier, Schwantz spoke with the young riders in their little area behind the Hall of Fame. Peter, Vancouver, Wash., was in that group. And now he was gone.

"I just came from talking to (fellow rider) Justin Morman," he said, shaking his head. "He was bawling his eyes out."

As word filtered out, dropping a dark cloud on the races that followed, the race community grieved in a very 21st-century way: They went to Facebook, the place where Michael Lenz had announced his son's passing.

There were people who knew Peter personally, knew him as one of the up-and-coming young motorcycle racers, a kid with the chops to someday ride on the MotoGP circuit.

There were people who didn't know him, who heard the soul-crushing news that a young teen had died Sunday morning at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

"I just fell over Peter on the Internet," Danish fan Allen Thomsen wrote me.

It's hard for most of us to come to terms with this because mothers and fathers are not supposed to bury their children. But it makes twisted sense to those who've dedicated their lives to the rush of adrenaline and competition.

During his post-race news conference, Spies was asked whether 13-year-olds should really be taking it to the limit on motorcycles, especially on a tough track like the Speedway.

It was a legitimate question, but moments later, after he had left the podium, Spies was seething.

"I found that question really, really aggravating," he told me later. "Just not a cool thing to ask."

We don't understand. We can't understand. But they will get on their bikes again, and they will test the limits again, and they will do it with the uncomfortable knowledge that there's a chance, just a chance, they might be next.