

Two I Admire

“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.” - Helen Keller -

Who do you respect? As I thought about Thanksgiving coming at the end of this month, I began making a mental list of people I appreciate. My list is long. I am blessed with many people like that, but there are two I would like to tell you about relative to our city. These people are visionaries. They saw two things Clarkston needed to remain unique. Bill Basinger knew Clarkston needed protecting, a good defense, and Jennifer Radcliff envisioned Clarkston nationally recognized, a great offense. Let me introduce these two visionaries.

Bill has left for Florida now. It's his time of year to go south, Ford Flex with tiny trailer in tow; "65 miles per hour and aim it south", he says. This summers' loving care of his little East Washington Greek Revival home is in his rear view mirror. When I was a young dad, 30 years ago, I sat on City Council watching Bill Basinger, Assistant Attorney General, commute to Lansing by day and lead Clarkston into cityhood by night. Bill saw the specter of an expanding township engulfing the pristine village we had inherited; developers turning shops on Main Street into chain food dispensaries and commercializing our homes into cute boutiques. Bill knew Clarkston needed the protection of being a city, self governing, if it was to remain special. The villagers agreed and voted in 1992 to become, The City of the Village of Clarkston, CVC. It is said, "We became a city to remain a village." Yes, the city is 30 years old in 2022.

Jennifer Radcliff along with Bill's wife, the late Susan Basinger, worked tirelessly to form an historic district from our rare, intact and contiguous, collection of time honored architectural "treasures", she called them; to have them recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. "We started our research", Jennifer said, "on the 'four corners' to establish the outline of the district in time to arrest MDOT's plans to widen their M-15 trunk line, Main Street, wiping out our business district and homes." Jennifer and Susan's research continues today, authorized by City Council, under the capable direction of Nancy Moon.

We have a new generation moving into the village. They love what they see, but many don't know the people who labored to preserve what we have, nor do they know the existing pressures to take our hometown and turn it to someone else's benefit. I admire those who remain vigilant to protect and maintain Clarkston.

Vision has two aspects, two sides of the same coin; imagining what we want and, conversely, dreading what we don't. The kind of vision Helen Keller spoke of is our preferred future, what we want. This Thanksgiving I'm thankful for those who saw, and those who still see, our preferred future and will sacrifice to make it come to be.

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