

OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER
founding editor, 1963

AT ISSUE

Public sessions are planned to hear comments and questions about the governor's tollway proposal.

OUR POINT

People concerned about the proposal should take advantage of the opportunity.

Use opportunity to voice concerns about tollway

The Daily Journal

The Indiana Senate is considering a bill that could lead to the construction of a toll road through southern Johnson County.

The prospect of a limited-access highway south of Franklin is a concern for many residents and has raised several questions.

People living near the route will get a chance to ask their questions, raise their concerns or express support for the idea at a public session Tuesday night in Franklin.

The Indiana Commerce Connector is a proposed toll road, running from Interstate 69 near Pendleton, south through Hancock and Shelby counties, west through Johnson County, into Morgan County and north to Interstate 70 west of Mooresville.

The governor's office and the Indiana Department of Transportation have described the event as a listening session. That could mean some people's questions will be heard, but the answers might not be available.

However, don't be too quick to dismiss the meeting as lip service. At a meeting with about a dozen legislators on Thursday, Gov. Mitch Daniels answered several questions. When he couldn't, he made sure staff members wrote the questions down so he could find out the answers.

On Tuesday, representatives of the governor's office and the transportation department will be at Franklin College. It will be one of several meetings in the area affected by the road.

Officials have said the meetings are not public hearings but will provide feedback that the state can take into consideration during studies of the proposed toll road.

New information, including a specific route, estimated tolls, the number of interchanges or the types of businesses that will locate along the road, will not be available at the meeting, officials have said.

But the importance of the issue is too great to miss opportunities to register opinions and raise questions.

For example, the road will require that farmland in Johnson County be taken out of production.

This could change the character of a wide swath of the county.

Also, questions have already been raised concerning the use of government's power of eminent domain to buy the land needed, given the fact Daniels wants a private company to build and operate the tollway.

On the other hand, an interstate could facilitate commercial traffic in central Indiana.

Daniels has said he wants to listen to public concerns. We must take him at his word.

The session Tuesday provides an excellent opportunity to have an impact on the project.

Those most affected by the road should take this chance to speak up.

Focus: Art Buchwald

Nation says goodbye to humorist, bon vivant

Scripps Howard News Service

"Hi. I'm Art Buchwald, and I just died," the humorist announces jovially in a video he made for his New York Times obituary.

Actually, he didn't "just" die. He had been at it since February, when he went off dialysis and checked himself into a hospice. But the expected death didn't come and his hospice room became a salon, with Buchwald receiving and entertaining his huge circle of Washington acquaintances.

"I'm having a swell time. The best time of my life," he told visitors.

Readers of Buchwald might nominate Paris of the '50s and Washington of the '60s as the best times of his life, but the appealing thing about Buchwald was the absolute absence of self-pity and his engagement with life in the present.

Thwarted in his plans for a timely death, he checked out of the hospice, where he had continued writing his column, and resumed his life as best he could, which in Buchwald's case was pretty well.

He continued writing and entertaining and even summered on his beloved Martha's Vineyard.

He had the manner of a carefree bon vivant, but life doesn't always imitate art.

He had an almost Dickensian childhood, in and out of orphanages and foster homes; fought battles with severe depression; and divorced a woman he loved and next to whom he will be buried.

Buchwald was a prolific writer. His play, "Sheep in the Runway," had the bad luck to premiere on Broadway during a newspaper strike.

To cite two of his writings: His unsparring autobiography, "Leaving Home," and his wonderfully loopy Thanksgiving column, run annually since 1953, in which he explains "Le Jour Mercu Donnant" to the French.

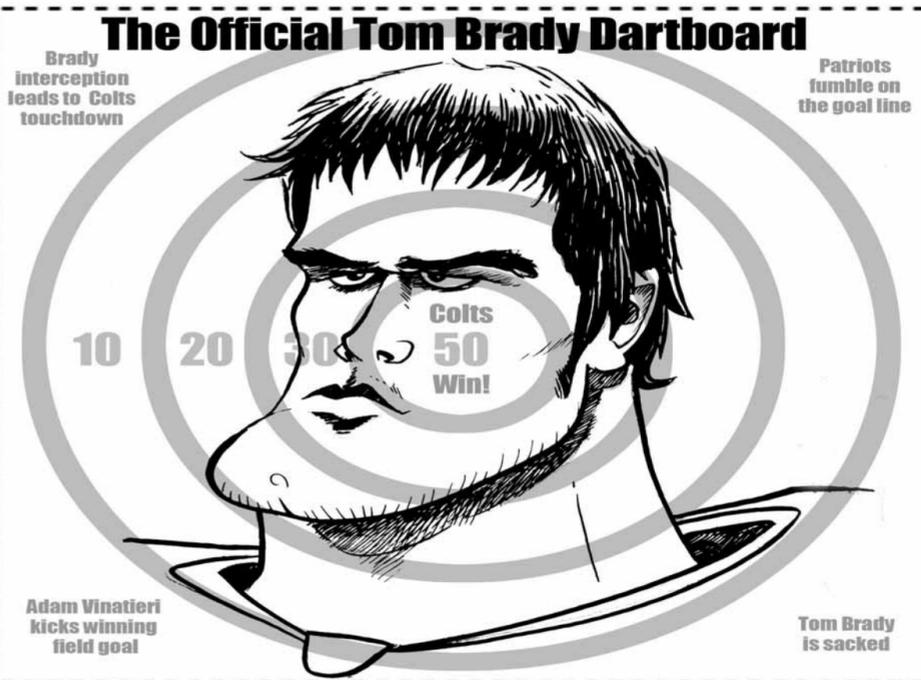
Buchwald died Wednesday at 81 at the home of his son. He said he was put on Earth to make people laugh. And he did.



BUCHWALD

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THE DAILY JOURNAL

Just clip out and have a blast poking (get it... "poking") fun at the Patriots. If possible, make sure you place in prominent view of Patriot fans.



YOUR VIEWS & COMMENTARY

Connector would change lives of county residents

To the editor:

Gov. Mitch Daniels is making a huge push with the legislature to pass a bill that will give him permission to establish and privatize toll road projects in Indiana, including the proposed beltway from Anderson to Plainfield, which will cut across the center of Johnson County.

Granting the governor this broad and unprecedented power would be a catastrophe for the residents of Johnson County.

Here's why: First of all, no one, including the governor, has enough information to determine if the beltway is a good or bad idea. We haven't done our homework. There have been no studies to measure the impact this project would have on our economy, our environment, our roadways or our overall way of life.

There have not been hearings to evaluate the pros and cons of such a massive project, and no other options have been discussed. In fact, the only study we can look to for guidance was commissioned by the state in 2005 and suggests that the long-term economic impact of such a roadway would be negligible at best. The Indiana Department of Transportation even suggests it would take close to two years to determine details of what the project would actually look like.

Any legislator who would give the governor permission at this early date to establish and privatize this tollway would be grossly irresponsible in representing the people of Indiana. Why? Because as soon as he has permission, Gov. Mitch Daniels will ink the deal.

He is a businessman first; and in his quest to fill the state's coffers through privatization, he has quickly adopted a "ready, shoot, aim" approach to governing the state and selling major projects to private interests.

Undoubtedly, he already has foreign investors lined up to buy into such a toll road.

Once a deal with outside investors is signed, which could happen within weeks, there won't be any need for public forums, legislative hearings, economic or environmental studies or discussion of any sort. It will be a done deal, and we will have absolutely no say about the process or end result. All of our democratic processes and recourse will be gone.

It will happen like this: The governor will sell your homes, your farms, your woodlands and your very way of life to foreign investors who aren't public

servants and won't answer to you. They won't be accountable in any way to what's in your best interest.

They will only be accountable to their stockholders and their bottom line, neither of which will be from Indiana. These foreign investors will make good money off of your land and way of life, not just today or tomorrow, but for decades to come.

If you think eminent domain doesn't apply to privately operated projects, you're wrong. Recent case law, as determined by the Supreme Court, has established the rights of private companies to take your land and property if it can be done in the name of greater good for the community.

So what would it look like? It will be a 1,000-foot-wide swath, cut straight through the county. In addition to the obvious noise and light pollution, which will reach out as far as three miles in either direction, the tollway will block nearly every north/south roadway across the county. Tollways, by their very nature, are designed to not have many exits.

The idea is to keep motorists on the roadway and generate higher revenue. So even though we may want an exit near Trafalgar or Morgantown, unless it's financially advantageous for the foreign investors, it will never happen.

Likewise, overpasses and underpasses will be at the discretion of the tollway. Effectively, this project will cut our county in half. Those leisurely trips to Apple Works or the Johnson County Park will be a thing of the past.

An additional benefit to the investors of these toll roads is a non-compete clause, which will severely hinder our ability to maintain and upgrade our county's free roadways. Roads like State Roads 44 and 252 will deteriorate over the years because they will be considered competition for a tollway, which we will have very limited access to in the first place. Your ability to travel throughout the county will be severely and forever restricted.

All of the proceeds from the sale of your homes, land and way of life will leave Johnson County for good. The governor plans to use the pot of money he gets from foreign investors to support the construction of the highly controversial and unpopular Interstate 69 between Evansville and Martinsville.

If he's ever able to pull that off, which is highly unlikely, he could complete the I-69 project by using this new tollway around the southeast side of Indianapolis to avoid huge opposition the project

already faces in northern Johnson and all of Marion counties.

The governor is trying to sell this tollway project by wrapping it in the blanket of economic development and prosperity. He wants us to believe that his primary motivation is the growth and development of Hancock, Shelby, Johnson and Morgan counties, when he's actually just using us to achieve his questionable goals on a much larger scale.

Historically, toll roads have not brought manufacturing or high-paying jobs to regions in which they are built. Aside from possibly an additional chance to buy a quarter-pounder or fill up our tanks, we will likely never see the large economic boom Daniels is promising.

The bottom line is this: If we don't act now, it will be too late. You need to call every legislator you can find, and call them today. Call them repeatedly.

If we don't act quickly, within days, this legislature will give the governor the OK he's looking for to sell your homes, your farms, your woodlands and your way of life. He will permanently draw an ugly line through our county and change your life forever. We can't let that happen.

I am calling upon the Daily Journal, the mayors, the council members, the commissioners and all state legislators to immediately call for a halt to this process until we have a genuine chance to evaluate the project.

We all deserve an informed decision. We won't have that chance if Gov. Daniels gets his way.

Doug Grant
Morgantown

Colts have nothing to prove to true-blue fans

To the editor:

To this point, not one of your sports writers at the Daily Journal have been giving the Colts anything except a hard time. And since the Colts have already given the true Colts fan a fantastic season, how about me writing the next "Colts column"?

I can tell the readers what a great team we are very lucky to have.

The Colts have repeatedly been in the playoffs. They have given us fans a true understanding of enduring the vicious remarks of sports writers.

They have accepted the challenge season after season and perform above most teams in the NFL.

True, they do not have Super Bowl rings, the so-called mark of true champions. But, they have made a respectable attempt at that elusive prize repeatedly.

They have shown they are champions and deserve all the respect that goes with that title. What happens if that ultimate prize eludes them again this year? Have they disappointed their fans? No.

Because the true Colts fan knows that the entire team has given of themselves far more than what any mere ordinary person or player would do.

They have weathered the wrath of poor journalism.

They have weathered the elements of fortune to give far more than they were paid to do.

They have weathered negativity from a city that has forgotten what sportsmanship means.

They had weathered the insults of radio announcers in poor taste.

So, do the Colts need Super Bowl rings to impress the true Colts fan? No.

A Super Bowl ring would most certainly make us proud. But with it comes even more criticism. After they should win that elusive prize, what then? The media would have a total feeding frenzy the next season. Long before the season even starts, it would begin its negative remarks.

The media has scorned many teams the very next season after they delivered a Super Bowl. Where is the respect and honor in that?

So I say a mere "thank you Colts" for a job well done. And should we get blessed with those rings, that is only another token reminder of how great you really are.

A true Colts fan doesn't need tokens. We keep the lights burning, late nights in the freezing cold, at the airport to welcome our precious Colts home. We challenge any negative remarks, and allow you to feel our wrath.

We dare writers to write only at their own peril. Because we the united group of true Colts fans will not falter in our respect for our Colts.

So go blue.

We the true Colts fans will be tailgating, filling pubs across the nation, screaming our hearts out in the living room, traveling from state to state to get only a glimpse at greatness, defending that last play until it's overturned and never, ever, forgetting, why we love you.

We worship greatness and recognize it right here in our own front yard.

Win or lose, going home after the last play of the last game of the season, we the true Colts fans will be in total awe at the greatness we have had the honor of being a part of.

The Colts legacy lives on.
Allen Watts
Greenwood

Turn off lights, cuddle up to save marriage, money

I have been following my wife around our house recently. And she's been following me. At some unpredictable times, in some very unlikely places, I find myself alone with Mary Ellen in a dimly lit room.

Just the other night, I was burning the midnight oil in my home office, working on an essay. My wife snuck into the room, looked into my eyes and said, "I don't think we'll be needing this."

With that, she clicked off the overhead light in the office, leaving only the glow of my desk lamp to illuminate her lovely face.

I know you think this is downright adorable, how the interest can still be there after 26 years. I recommend that every couple try this, no matter the stage of — or how long you have endured — your marriage. The Wolfies have certainly benefited. In fact, we can even measure our success.

Why, last month alone — by not leaving on unnecessary lights — we saved \$13.45 in electricity.



Dick Wolfie

This is part of my wife's obsession with going on a budget, which first reared its ugly head right before the holidays. Christmas morning, I was pleasantly surprised when I eyed my pile of gifts, and it was uncharacteristically a bit more plentiful than my wife's. I was prematurely joyful. I opened one of the more enticing packages.

"Ooo-kay ... this is a library book, isn't it?" I asked, trying to hide just a tinge of disappointment.

"I know, isn't that a great idea for a present, Dick? Instead of blowing 30 bucks on a bestseller at Barnes and Noble — which

you do every week — or buying expensive CDs online, I picked a few classics at the library, wrapped them up and stuck on a bow. Are you surprised?"

"Shocked, really. I forgot I was a Nathaniel Hawthorne fan."

"And that really huge package over there? Guess what it is."

"Well, I always wanted a Mini Cooper. But I have a feeling it's the complete works of James Fenimore Cooper."

"Aw, you peeked. But I hope you enjoy your gifts."

"Of course, Mary Ellen, but just like every other year, I'm going to have to return everything you gave me."

"OK, Dick. Now let's each name something else that we think the other person could save on. For example, I think you should give up that cup of java and apple turnover you've picked up every day on the way to work for 20 years."

"Why would I do that?"

"According to an article I read in Fortune magazine, if we had

saved that five bucks a day for 10 years, invested it in Google, then sold all that stock before October of 2000, we'd be millionaires. I bet that puts a little crimp in your caffeine addiction."

"Just think, if I had been going to Starbucks instead of Speedway, we'd be billionaires."

"Here's another way we can save, Dick. Beginning today, we are going to start to make sacrifices. We could save by changing the oil in the car ourselves; we could save by doing the lawn work ourselves; we could save by cleaning out the gutters ourselves; and we could save by washing the car ourselves. I certainly hope you know the meaning of the word 'save.'"

"Mary Ellen, I just hope you know the meaning of the word 'we.'"

Television personality Dick Wolfie writes this weekly humor column for the Daily Journal. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com