

OPINION

**FIRST AMENDMENT** “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

OUR VIEW

Doing what can be done

With more than 90 inches of snow in the region, and hopefully not much more to come, the Water Levels Committee of the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board is taking the right steps to avoid the risk of high water levels and the potential for flooding. A creation of the International Joint Commission, members of the board and committee are closely monitoring the snow melt and watching rain forecasts as they direct the two companies that operate the dams to adjust flows to make room for the additional moisture. Lee Grim, a member of both the committee and board, said the members are concerned and trying to be proactive. That’s surely a positive move. Having a local person serving on the committee and board clearly gives the other members insight they may not otherwise have. Grim told The Journal he’s been talking to local folks who spend a lot of time on the lakes about the issue and they believe action to make more room for the expected influx of water into the system makes sense. For years, shoreline property owners have criticized the actions or inactions of the water regulators during times of flooding and low-water

levels. But there’s a lot to consider when attempting to control the activities of nature. We may continue the freeze-thaw, freeze-thaw cycle, which will allow the snow to melt slowly as runs into the lakes and rivers. And the forecast for little more snow and not much rain may be right. But then again, Old Man Winter, as we found out in the past four months, follows no rules or the will of humans. There’s also the concerns about effect downstream on the Rainy River. When water is released from the Namakan Reservoir and Rainy Lake, it ends up in Rainy River, which provides drinking water for some communities and is the site of a spectacular walleye and lake sturgeon spawning run. Those factors must be considered when making adjustments. And as Grim notes, a tricky balancing act is required to keep lakes and rivers at levels appropriate for the needs of the fish and wildlife, as well as the humans who choose to live along the shoreline. Clearly, all that can be done is being done to help alleviate the risk of high water levels and the potential for flooding. Now, it’s up to Mother Nature to take on Old Man Winter.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Minnesota moose herd survival and predator management

**To the editor,**  
In Minnesota, hunters and trappers have a long tradition as the primary tool in wildlife management. This management legacy is entrusted to our own Department of Natural Resources, whose management philosophy is guided by field research and data. It is becoming increasingly obvious as recent research shows that over predation by timber wolves is a key factor in this decline, especially among the collared moose calves whose attrition rate is approximately 75 percent due to wolf predation. Wildlife managers in Minnesota are learning what their counterparts in Alaska and Canada have long known; predator management is key in maintaining a sustainable moose population. In British Columbia,

where my brother owns and operates as a guide outfitter, territory wildlife managers strive to maintain at least a 60-percent cow to calf moose ratio by using hunters and trappers as their No.1 predator management tool. As a result they have a healthy and sustainable moose and wolf population. Sadly, in Minnesota, we are not even reaching a 25-percent calf survival rate. It is also noteworthy that in these regions, predator management is widely supported by the native and resident hunters, guides, trapper and outfitters who are proud of their ancestral traditions and professions and understand the need to protect subsistence food stocks like moose, elk, deer and caribou from over predation. In my own experience, in the 45 years I have traversed and hunted in

the wilderness areas of northern Minnesota, I have noted that as our whitetail deer numbers have declined, timber wolves have changed their hunting tactics by deploying larger pack numbers of 10-plus wolves, evolving so to speak to greatly increase their efficiency at moose predation, especially in later winters deep encrusted snow when shear pack size and wear the prey down tactics greatly increase the attrition rate of both adult and calf moose. As we all know much too well, three of the last four winters have been particularly harsh, placing a heavy strain on our northern deer herd and remaining moose population. Anti-predator management groups have made much ado about winter wolf numbers being slightly lower in winter aerial surveys this year

than last year. I would point out that wolf numbers are always at their lowest yearly ebb in the mid-winter prey yelping season and as a pilot I know it is never easy to ascertain exact numbers of wolves and even moose by aerial counting in the rugged, heavy conifer forests of northern Minnesota. I believe many wilderness area and trans border wolves are simply missed, meaning actual wolf numbers are highly likely to be higher than officially stated. This belief is also held by most outdoors people I have talked to in this region. I believe it would be a betrayal of public trust if we would ignore the facts of the recent moose study and let wolf management and our moose be sacrificed on the altar of political correctness.

James Aker Orr, MN

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The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author’s city address will be published. Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.

I’m Batman — and I’m 75!

According to DC Comics, March 30 marked the 75th anniversary of the first appearance of Batman (in “Detective Comics” #27). I’m proud to have been a fan of the Caped Crusader (created by Bob Kane and Bill Finger) for two-thirds of that span. With Batman and Robin available in 12-cent comic books on the spinner rack at Sharp’s Drive-In Market, via the syndicated newspaper strip in the evening Nashville Banner and on TV in the campy, tongue-in-cheek version starring Adam West and Burt Ward, my routine in first grade was preordained. Each day at recess, Jeff McCleendon and I would choose teams and fight in imitation of the choreographed chaos on the boob tube. This went on until a playground monitor went all “Commissioner Gordon” on us and put a stop to our disturbance of the peace. I decided then and there that playground monitors were a cowardly, superstitious lot and vowed to dedicate my energies to striking terror in their hearts. That, or throw up in the cafeteria after all the



Danny TYREE  
TYRADES!

horseplay. I was flexible. When I was 12, I shoveled snow for an elderly lady so I could afford a subscription to “Justice League of America,” featuring Batman and his super-powered buddies. When I was a teenager, the Powers That Be were distancing themselves from the TV silliness and returning the comic-book character to his “creature of the night” roots. In arguments with my brother, I made a big deal out of celebrating the retro push to re-label plain ol’ Batman as “the Batman.” Looking back, maybe that preoccupation had something to do with my being dubbed “the dateless man.” In 1986, I joined the throngs who sang the

praises of “The Dark Knight Returns,” Frank Miller’s “grim and gritty” graphic novel about a crotchety Batman pulled out of retirement. In retrospect, it would probably have been more realistic if the “POW! SOCK! BAM!” sound effects had been applied to Bruce Wayne’s middle-aged gastrointestinal tract. And if Batman told the police to ditch the high-tech Bat Signal in favor of snail mail. As a columnist for “Comics Buyer’s Guide” (1983-2000), I received two postcards from Alex Toth (designer of the “Super Friends” characters), wrote a controversial column called “Why Doesn’t Batman Go To Church?” and supplied a 50th anniversary piece, finding validity in all the myriad interpretations of Batman — as long as someone somewhere derived pleasure and inspiration to fight injustice from a particular interpretation. Granted, people have broad views of injustice. (“My parents waved at me! At the mall! In front of my friends! There’s no justice!”)

My wife and I watched the 1989 Michael Keaton version of Batman while dating, and FOX’s “Batman: The Animated Series” brightened the afternoons of two geeky newlyweds. While Batman collected clues to solve mysteries involving The Riddler or The Penguin, we tackled even more perplexing mysteries, such as “Holy HazMat! Who left the toilet seat up?” “That’s one of mine,” beamed Jerry Robinson (former Kane assistant and creator of The Joker), before he graciously autographed my wife’s T-shirt (featuring a 1940s Batman cover) at the 1992 Chicago ComiCon. Now our 10-year-old son Gideon is experiencing Batman via digital comic books, “The LEGO Movie,” Scooby-Doo DVDs and other means. I hope his generation will keep the Gotham Goliath relevant for the NEXT 75 years. I’ll be watching. Same Bat Time... Tyree’s weekly columns are distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons Inc. newspaper syndicate.