

LOCAL

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CARWASH OK'd: The Mishawaka City Council overrode a mayoral veto Monday to allow a car wash on the far north side.
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Scott Topping of Dowagiac is a self-described Ring Lardner fanatic. The English instructor will lecture on the life and writings of the author on Wednesday, the 11th anniversary of Lardner's birth.

Lardner legacy inspires teacher

By ANN JACOBSON
Tribune Staff Writer

DOWAGIAC — Scott Topping could have the opportunity to meet with the late author, Ring Lardner, he knows exactly what he'd do. The Lardner devotee would take him to a bar and buy him a drink.

"I would like to hang out with him to what was his element," said Topping, who has studied Lardner's journalistic and literary legacies and even wrote his master's thesis at Western Michigan University on Lardner. Topping occasionally teaches classes at SMC just on Lardner's prolific 35-year career and is currently writing two books about him.

The work of Lardner, who died in 1933, may not be as readily known as American authors such as E.B. White, Ernest Hemingway, and Sinclair Lewis, but he rubbed elbows with them all.

Wednesday would have been Lardner's 111th birthday, and Topping, a Southwestern Michigan College English instructor, has taken his casual fascination with Lardner

LECTURE ON LARDNER
Scott Topping will lecture on Ring Lardner Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. in honor of the 111th anniversary of the late author's birth. The free lecture will be in the Foundation Educational Center at SMC's campus in Dowagiac.

beyond the walls of his classrooms and into cyber-space.

Topping, who'll lecture Wednesday night at SMC on Lardner's career, has created a Web page on the Internet, focusing on Lardner's life, career and penchant for the night life. Not only does it give biographical information and a list of his major public works, it also includes a hand-drawn sample and drawing stories.

Topping's preoccupation with Lardner began in the early 1980s while living in Colorado, when he failed the author's name on a book called "How To Write Short Stories" with the name of a school (Ring Lardner).

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THE LIFE OF RING LARDNER

Here is biographical information on the late Ring Lardner, a writer born and raised in Illinois.

■ **Born:** Ringgold Wilmer Lardner, on March 6, 1885, in Niles to Henry and Lena Phillips Lardner. His parents were wealthy, having made their fortune dealing in land speculation and then owning a lumber yard. Ring Lardner died of a heart attack in 1933 at the age of 48.

■ **Childhood:** The young Lardner excelled in many sports, especially basketball.

■ **Local history:** Lardner's boyhood home still stands at 519 Bond St. in Niles, renovated into apartments. The home once occupied an entire city block and included a basketball diamond and stadium.

■ **Career:** At age 20, Lardner was a sports reporter for the now-defunct South Bend Times. Two years later, he covered sporting events for the Chicago Inter-Ocean and Chicago Examiner, traveling with the White Sox. He later wrote for the Chicago Tribune, St. Louis Sporting News, Boston American, and Chicago American.

■ **Family:** At age 26, he married Ella Abbott of Goshen. The couple had four sons: John, Abbott, James Phillips, Ringgold Wilmer "Biff" Jr. and David.

■ **Literary works:** In addition to sports stories and columns for newspapers, Lardner wrote several plays and published collections of short stories, including "You're Weirdest Short Stories," "What If?" "You Know Me, Al," "Goldfish's Trunk," "The Big Teaser" and "The Love Nest and Other Stories."

Downtown crash disrupts traffic; 1 hospitalized

By HOWARD DUKES
Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND — One serious injury resulted from a car-truck accident the morning of Michigan Street and LaSalle Avenue that forced rerouting of early morning traffic downtown.

A truck ended up on a sidewalk next to the LaSalle Hotel building after the crash, with a rig heading two trailers jumped a curb and knocked a traffic signal through a window at St. Joseph Station — potentially a major tragedy had it occurred during rush hour or lunch time.

The driver of the car was seriously injured in the two-vehicle accident. Police say accident played a role in the accident.

Raymond J. Opek, 23, of 2241 Pleasant St., was listed in critical condition in Memorial Hospital after the car he was driving was struck by the truck.

Police said witnesses at the scene told them that Opek was eastbound on LaSalle going through the intersection at Michigan when his vehicle was struck by the tractor-trailer rig driven by Richard L. Allen, 45, of Strongsville, Ohio.

Opek lost control of his car, which was knocked westward, jumped a curb, into a light pole and came to a rest in front of the former LaSalle Hotel, which is located at the southwest corner of the intersection.

Allen lost control when he was in an attempt to avoid the accident. His truck hit a light pole that smashed Opek's head against, but they say it was "significantly over" it, which is the threshold for introduction in Indiana.



A truck jacked after the collision struck by the truck.

Folksy reporter tells of heartland

By JENNIFER MARTIN
Tribune Staff Writer

BENTON, MISSOURI — Charles Kuralt sees goodness in the people of rural America.

"Michigan is a very inviting place to be," he said last week when he visited the Michigan Economic Club on Monday. "It's full of great people and small towns and good people who are willing to spend time with you when you visit."

The famed feature reporter for CBS dropped by Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center for an informal "chat" with several hundred members of the club. "Really, what I like to do is just spend this whole thing and go to a bar somewhere, and just talk," he said to laughter and applause.

Kuralt has taken that same casual style into college-age through-out small-town America. More and more, he likes what he sees.

"We are a lot more just and humane than we used to be," he said. "The country I found gives out cups of coffee and great slices of pie and always wanted you to stay longer. That's not the same country you read about on the front page of the newspaper."

Kuralt, who won three Peabody Awards and 13 Emmys for his years portraying everyday life on "CBS Sunday Morning," said journalists too often miss the kinder side of America.

"I don't mean that journalists shouldn't tell what's wrong. (But) I have often wondered if (future) historians will notice some things of value that we have overlooked. I think the impulse for decency and the will for justice are much stronger than they used to be in our national life."

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Kuralt mentioned the good side of the effects of Michigan. Kuralt, 47, co-anchor of CBS' "CBS Sunday Morning" and co-anchor of "CBS Evening News" with Katie Couric.

Sheriff: Jail for 480 won't be enough

By JACK COLLWELL
Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND — Sheriff Joseph E. Speckbrock today challenged critics of his jail proposal "to put their names on the dotted line," saying that they are confident a 480-space jail will be adequate for the next 20 years.

The sheriff, irritated by critics who contend that his proposed 480-space jail was too big and too costly, said he stands by his estimate of both present and future needs.

"People keep saying, 'Well, why can't you build a \$24 million jail?'" Speckbrock said. He referred to the estimated cost of construction for the 480-space jail initially proposed for the Studebaker Corridor.

Seeing an attempt to build an adequate jail for that amount "would be fun," the sheriff said. He suggested that the "fun" would be having the last laugh as costs went higher and future demands proved that an inadequate facility had been constructed.

More than "fun" is involved, however, the sheriff said, because rising crime, particularly with an increase in gang activity, would mean that an inadequate jail would endanger public safety.

While his initial proposal for an airport site jail carried a \$60 million cost, Speckbrock said, he sees that cost cut to \$50 million through elimination of one of the proposed "pods" for cells.

Four pods still are needed and so is space for expansion, the sheriff said.

Meanwhile, the sheriff said he is looking at at least three possible sites for a work release center that could take some of the pressure this summer off the present overcrowded jail.

Speckbrock said the present jail, with 170 cell capacity, now has more than 300 inmates on many occasions and could reach the top of the dome by the end of the summer.

He said if judges ordered a taste of jail for all the cases in the jail, it would be in the Studebaker Corridor.

Speckbrock stressed that the work release proposal would not eliminate need for a new jail but would only take pressure off temporarily.

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Organizers reveal proposals for military honor park

By DON PORTER
Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND — Backers of a proposed military honor park on the far northwest side hope to break ground this summer for the project, estimated to cost just under \$1 million.

Planning meetings for the park were held Sunday at Michigan Hospital Transportation Center that will honor veterans of the military branches — the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard — said project organizers Ernest Culp, August "Gus" Karsen and John Kapi.

They invited Mayor Joseph E. Korman, a Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, on the project at 100000th Ave. N. in Niles. The mayor gave the plans his enthusiastic backing.

Those plans now call for a much more visible location for the park just east of the main entrance to South Bend. Field on Lincoln Way West, Culp said. The St. Joseph County Airport Authority has made a few-acre tract available for it to add.

It originally had been proposed for the north side of Lardner Street just north of the airport.

Being proposed, Culp said, is a postage-shaped memorial on several levels. The conference would be an old Air Force F-35 fighter jet plane. It was salvaged from a barn at a farm in Kentland, Ind., where it had been stored in several pieces for more than 30 years.

"It was a mess," Culp said of the extensively rusted plane. All of the materials were done by volunteers over 18 months, he added.

Other items proposed for the park include a World War II B-24 bomber, two 50-millimeter Navy anti-aircraft cannons, a submarine torpedo, and a 155-millimeter Marine Corps howitzer.

The group also would like to obtain either an Air Force F4U or Navy B-24 bomber airplane, Culp said.

Mention of the latter aircraft brought a cry from the mayor's house. He was doing a Vigilance in Vietnam when it was shot down and became a prisoner of war during the conflict.

The most difficult task has been coming up with an item to represent the Coast Guard, since old cutters are in short supply, Culp said.

The park would be developed over several years using donations, not tax dollars, the three organizers said. If all goes as

planned, the development could include a small museum to house other military artifacts they added.

Individual local veterans would be honored with their names on the brick making up the main display, Culp said.

The St. Joseph County Veterans Council is backing the project, said Karsen, president of the group.

"We've done a great job. It's a proper location and would be a great addition," Karsen said of the park.

He noted that more than a million people pass through the transportation center each year, not counting traffic on U.S. 20.