



IOWA TODAY

EASTERN IOWA

The
Cigarette
B

SET IN STONE

Ich!! Film stirs up lots of pots

IOWA CITY — Good hand-wringing opportunities rarely are passed up in this town, and the one that came to us *auf Deutsch* last week is no exception.



TOM ANGLIN

Gazette Iowa City Columnist

And highly placed hand-wringing it has been. Seems that no one has been too busy to take notice of the University of Iowa German department for its showing of "Taxi zum Klo" ("Taxi to the Bathroom" for you English speakers out there), a film absolutely drippin' with sex, to students in some of its classes.

Gov. Terry Branstad took a quick break from his duties of economically gutting the state universities and taunting state employee unions to say, "I don't think (the film) has any place in a public-supported university." U of I officials reported fielding several calls from state legislators, venting their spleens over the flick. President Hunter Rawlings, who needed this brouhaha at this time like a hole in the head, said the German department showed bad judgment in running the film.

Undoubtedly, the breadth of the reaction was greater than it otherwise would have been because the film depicted graphic sexual activity between men. Introduce the element of homosexuality to a controversy, and conservative groups will suddenly find fund raising a lot easier. We've seen it before; bizarre or promiscuous acts, no matter how rare in fact, can readily be ascribed to all gay men and lesbians, and the public will fall for it. I need not tell you who will seize that opportunity in this area.

German instructors, by the way, were quick to point out that fliers for "Taxi zum Klo" warned that the film might be offensive to some, and that students weren't required to attend (although a few students say that they understood otherwise). What's more, this film, replete with men engaged in oral sex and urinating on one another, was said to be particularly effective in conveying conversational German. (Perhaps, but think of the vocabulary you'd be picking up.)

Ten years ago, I took a number of German classes at the U of I; nothing resembling the not-yet-released "Taxi zum Klo" was shown in any of them. I vaguely recall a picture starring 1960s siren Elke Sommer, but it's a long way from there to here. Most of the instructional films were from a collection called "Guten Tag, Wie geht's?," a slapstick-style series that had less in common with "Taxi zum Klo" than with "Car 54, Where Are You?" As badly-acted as a Japanese monster movie and as harmless as Amy Grant, the films amused but held little value for me as a conversation builder. If the sex film is an indication that the German department is looking for better teaching vehicles, even if this one backfired, that isn't all bad.

Therein lies the main point. The university hired the German faculty now on staff because of their depth of knowledge about German language and culture, and their proven abilities to teach about same. The last thing they should have to worry about is pressure from elected officials in Des Moines, the same officials who have so tightened the university's purse strings that we may have to settle for dubious offerings (if "Taxi zum Klo" constitutes such) more often.

Hopefully, higher-ranking officials within the university will also show restraint. If they see a consistent pattern of complaint, from a broad range of students, and relating to instructional value rather than mere content, then the university needs to take a look at what a department is doing. But public-relations brushfires are not even remotely a good enough reason to apply heat.

Of course, students have every right to avoid material they consider objectionable. To avoid sex in film, they can stay home. Or take Russian.

Tom Anglin's column appears Sunday, Tuesday and Friday in the Iowa City edition of The Gazette.

Friends, family bury murder victim

2 questioned, but attacker still remains at large

By Lyle Muller
Gazette staff writer
SPRINGDALE — About 300 people bid farewell to Thomas Mather on Thursday and buried him less than one mile from where he was murdered Monday night.

"None of us know what will happen to us today, but we know that evil is a reality to us in this world," the Rev. Richard Paulus told the crowd that spilled outside at Mather's brief memorial service.

"That evil attacks good people. It attacks people like Tom."

Mather, 32, was killed by an intruder who entered Mather's home while he and his wife, Dawn, watched television.

The killer remains at large, despite massive searches in Cedar County and southern Linn County and several calls from people responding to a public description.

Meanwhile, people came Thursday to the unincorporated Cedar County town of Springdale, about four miles east of West Branch, to pay their respects to a native whose family has deep roots in the area.

They filled the upstairs and basement at the Springdale United Methodist Church. Some had to stand outside and listen to the service through a loudspeaker.



Thomas Mather's sister, Julie of Iowa City, (left) and his mother, Mildred of West Branch, sit at his grave Thursday at Springdale Cemetery. Thomas Mather was shot and killed Monday night by an intruder, who is at large.

Friends and relatives continue to ask why this happened, Paulus said in the eulogy. "I wish I had a good answer to that question, but I'm afraid I don't have an answer that will satisfy us," he said.

"I do not believe that this death was God's will."

Other than basic information, investigators continued to withhold details they have learned.

"There are certain things that, at this point, are basically only known to us and the killer," Cedar County Sheriff Keith Whitlatch said. "We're going to keep it that way."

Whitlatch declined to say whether investigators have determined a motive.

"None of us know what will happen to us today, but we know that evil is a reality to us in this world."

the Rev. Richard Paulus

Mather died of a gunshot wound to the head, State Medical Examiner Thomas Bennett ruled. He was killed in the house but Dawn escaped, authorities said.

Friends said Thomas and Dawn Mather did not know the assailant. Whitlatch said they cannot rule out that the assail-

ant may have known Thomas Mather. He said Dawn did not know the man.

However, authorities believe the man may have been an itinerant. They stopped two itinerants, including one with a criminal record, who were in the area Wednesday. Neither matched detailed descriptions

of the killer, Whitlatch said.

"One even had a record that could be consistent with this type of crime. But after checking him out, he just didn't match at all in any way, shape or form."

Whitlatch declined to say where the men were stopped. However, Iowa City police reported checking two men Wednesday morning, one in the 1100 block of South Riverside Drive and one on Interstate 80.

Authorities described the assailant as white; about 30 years old; with a slender to medium build; about 6 feet tall; with collar-length light-colored hair and no facial hair.



Gazette photo by Val Swinton

Diane Torkelson of Monona, also known as Roxie, caresses the cheeks of Brad Carnes (left) and Tim McMillan, both of Elkader, while Larry Popenhagen of Wadena pats her stomach. The antics are from a scene in "Chicago," now playing at the old Volga City Opera House.

Mom's in for a surprise

Elkader Players get a little bit naughty

By Val Swinton
Gazette staff writer
VOLGA — Diane Torkelson has been keeping a secret from her mother. The Monona woman plays Roxie Hart, an accused murderess in the vaudeville musical "Chicago" playing tonight, Saturday night and next weekend at the Old Volga City Opera House.

"I haven't told my mother about the opening scene, yet," Torkelson said Wednesday during a break in the Elkader Opera House Players rehearsal.

"That gentleman over there in the tuxedo and I, we end up in bed. I haven't told my mother about that yet. She'll be surprised when she comes."

The musical contains a couple of bedroom scenes — no nudity, though — and enough salty language to make a sailor feel at home.

The musical is a departure from the normal family fare presented by the Opera House Players. Director Tom Chandler doesn't expect many objections.

"I think it will be accepted because we have advertised it as primarily adult entertainment," said Chandler, elementary and high school band director at the Central Community School District. "I wouldn't send my elementary-age daughter to see it. Now my daughter whose a teen-ager and her friends, they bought tickets."

"Chicago" represents several breaks with tradition for the Opera House Players, a community theater group more than 30 years old.

The group has moved its act down the road about eight miles away from the friendly confines of the Elkader Opera House, which has no facilities for a dinner theater, to the Old Volga City Opera House.

The acoustics are not nearly as good and there are no dressing rooms.

"So you become real friendly with the rest of the people," Torkelson said with a laugh.

This is the group's first dinner theater performance. Opera House owner Dennis Klingman, who has a restaurant downstairs, will serve cornish hen or stuffed Iowa pork chops.

And the participants are doing more dancing and singing then they have in previous performances.

"I think the music is probably the most difficult we've ever done," said Torkelson, who is performing in her 14th musical. "And there's a lot of it. I mean, every scene has music except for the trial scene."

The musical is a satire on the legal system, the press and the public's fascination with violent crime. It takes place in Chicago during the roaring 20s.

Roxie Hart and the other lead character, Velma Kelley, played by Joan Francis of rural St. Olaf, are among six woman inmates in a Chicago jail accused of murdering their husbands. The two lead characters compete to stay in the media spotlight and out of the hangman's noose.

For eight long weeks, the cast has been rehearsing nights and returning to their regular jobs during the day.

"Some nights, we just rehearse dancing and singing. That's two to three hours of dancing and singing," said Fayette County Auditor Larry Popenhagen, who plays a variety of roles.

"So you get home at night and you're so energized, you can't sleep. So yes, you do get tired."

Although tickets were selling well for the 250-seat dinner theater, none of the performances was a sellout at midweek, Chandler said. There is reserved seating only and tickets can be purchased by calling 245-1674.

Anamosa looks beyond shock of Emerson closing

By Dave Rasdal
Gazette staff writer

ANAMOSA — It will be weeks, perhaps years, before the shock wears off that Anamosa is losing one of its largest industries and the 68 jobs that go with it.

But Dan McNamara, president of the Anamosa Economic and Industrial Corp., said all will not be lost with the Dec. 6 closing of Emerson Motor Co., a manufacturer of small electric motors.

Emerson will leave behind a modern, well-built, well-cared-for, easily accessible facility that could attract another major employer to the Jones County seat.

"We're following up on leads right now," McNamara said. "We're hustling to get all that we can as soon as we can."

When asked if he could disclose information about prospects, McNamara said it would not be wise to discuss them at this time.

"Let's just say we have several leads. At this time, we want to keep all of our options open."

EMERSON'S CLOSING was announced Tuesday afternoon — first to employees and then to a select group of community and business leaders. Later that evening the economic and industrial corporation gathered to initiate efforts to attract a replacement.

"It was a shock to us. It was a shock to all of the employees," McNamara said. "We'd heard rumors for a while, but nobody believed them. It was just a case of too many motors and not enough market."

Company officials were releasing little information, other than that the plant will be closed "due to overcapacity and a soft market." A press release said the situation had existed for several years and was compounded by the recession. The company also said it would assist employees with "re-employment, and severance and other provisions."

Meeting set on education plan

ELKADER — One of a series of regional meetings to discuss the long-range plan for Iowa's educational system will be from 7 to 9:30 p.m. Oct. 16 at Central Community High School in Elkader.

It's a chance for the public to discuss draft recommendations by the Strategic Planning

"We're following up on leads right now. We're hustling to get all that we can as soon as we can."

Dan McNamara

Emerson Motor Co. took over the Doerr Electric Corp. facility near the intersection of highways 151 and 64 in January 1986. Peak employment reached 175 in 1981. It has employed 68 for the past three or four years.

The plant manufactures a NEMA 56 replacement motor for such things as farm implements and appliances. Two other Emerson Motor Co. plants — in Sturgeon Bay, Wis., and Kennet, Mo. — also manufacture the motor.

"Emerson really wants to help the community," McNamara said. "This is unfortunate, but we can't say enough about the company. They've done a lot of good for this community."

EMERSON OFFICIALS said closing the Anamosa plant has nothing to do with the work force, the community or local management, McNamara said. It all came down to overall company economics.

Industrial prospects visiting Anamosa have been impressed with the community — its school system, renovated "main street," swimming pool, civic center and work force, McNamara said. The one thing prospects felt Anamosa lacked was a facility.

The 16-year-old Emerson building features 60,000 square feet of wide-open production space and a 2,200-square-foot office. It is situated on 20 acres.

"We have something to sell, a very high-quality building," McNamara said. "Maybe someone will read this in your paper and be interested."

Council to provide directions for the Iowa educational system.

The regional meetings will provide opportunity to review and react before the final plan is presented to the Iowa State Board of Education in November.