

Happy Birthday, Stephen!

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly History June 20, 2019

(The latest in a series of posts on Gadfly History)

Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be gadflies,

Gadflies ain't easy to love and they're harder to hold

They'd rather give you a snarl than diamonds or gold

fantasy first draft of Waylon Jennings' and Willie Nelson's hit song

Stephen Antalics – Bethlehem's Gadfly #1 – is 90 years old Friday June 21.

Stephen doesn't want me to make a fuss.

But I think he's extraordinary.

For at least twenty years, he's attended virtually every City Council meeting.

And held feet to fire. With facts. With wit.

A smiling Stephen recently described gadflies as "pit bulls — when our teeth sink into the shank, God help the poor victim, since we are unrelenting! We do NOT quit, since we wear gold



badges and white hats. Offenders beware.”

I love this picture of Stephen. Clenched fists. A warrior.

People have said to me, “what’s the use. You gadfly guys never win.”

Stephen’s had his share of winning.

But those naysayers just don’t understand.

Winning isn’t the goal for the gadfly. Speaking truth to power is.

His “That’s not right!” has wrinkled the brow of a generation of public officials.

Stephen’s gadfly lineage includes Socrates, Thoreau, Gandhi, MLK – are they losers?

Gadflies believe with MLK that the long arc of the universe bends toward justice.

Underappreciated is Stephen’s written and oral artistry.

Here just two weeks ago at City Council Stephen puts aside his prepared remarks and fills his five precious allotted minutes – on the fly – with a perfectly paced, perfectly shaped lament on the fate and state of the Southside, a haunting melody in his playlist over the years.

Stephen doesn’t want me to make a fuss.

But I love the man that he is for what he has done for us so completely unselfishly for so long.

Mamas, please let your babies grow up to be gadflies. Like Stephen.

We need 'em.

If followers would like to send Stephen birthday messages, Gadfly will collect and post them.