

Braced for fall

Steve Hoffman offers a snappy sketch of what voters can expect in the fall campaign season.

B3

Local & Opinion



PHIL MASTURZO/Akron Beacon Journal
Sculptor John Comunale wants someone to buy his catfish, Luther, and move it from its home near Luigi's Restaurant.

Catfish who lives in 'Oz' needs home

Nobody knows better than Luther that his world is changing. The 13-foot stainless-steel catfish has been perched (so to speak) at North Howard and Furnace streets for 13 years, watching Akron reinvent itself around him.

Occasionally, when the wind is right, he turns to see the new townhouses rising just a few yards to the north. When he



DAVID GIFFELS

swings back to face west, he sees the construction trailer in his path.

On the hillside beyond, the bedraggled, arson-prone house known as the "painted lady" has been demolished. In the valley below, the Elizabeth Park housing project is being replaced with a bold residential development. The national park is growing and changing; the Hickory Street neighborhood is rising up; the scenic railroad is chugging along.

Now it's time for him to move on. Which is no mean feat for a 13-foot stainless steel catfish. He's going to need some help.

Luther, a quirky landmark at the entrance to the Northside neighborhood affectionately known as "Oz," is being displaced by the development surrounding him.

The land where he rests on a concrete abutment has been sold to Testa Cos. - which is building the Northside Lofts - and will become the site for a townhouse.

Luther's creator, sculptor John Comunale, wants someone to adopt him (for a price) and put him in another public spot.

"People have been looking at it for such a long time. Everyone likes it. I'd like for them to still be able to see it," he said this week.

In the years since Luther was welded together in the early 1990s, Comunale's work has helped animate the Akron landscape.

He put a giant metal cockroach on the side of TNT Exterminating Co., also in the Northside district. He put a big pizza on the side of Luigi's. He crafted the Zippy statue at the McDonald's adjacent to the University of Akron campus. He made the stately clock on the leading corner of the Everett Building at Main and Market streets. He made the giant image of a lady sipping coffee on the side of Mocha Maiden and the man swinging the sledgehammer on top of Northside Grill.

Luther, meanwhile, has stood as a quirky sentinel on the hillside leading to Luigi's and its neighboring businesses and art galleries on downtown's northernmost edge.

The shiny fish arrived there one day in 1993 in the bed of Comunale's Dodge Dakota pickup truck. Comunale had scavenged a heavy steel base with a post from an art student's abandoned sculpture. He and some buddies muscled the base onto the concrete stanchion and lowered Luther on top, where he could pivot like a weathervane.

Comunale pulled the name from his personal history. He used to live in North Carolina, with a pond on his property.

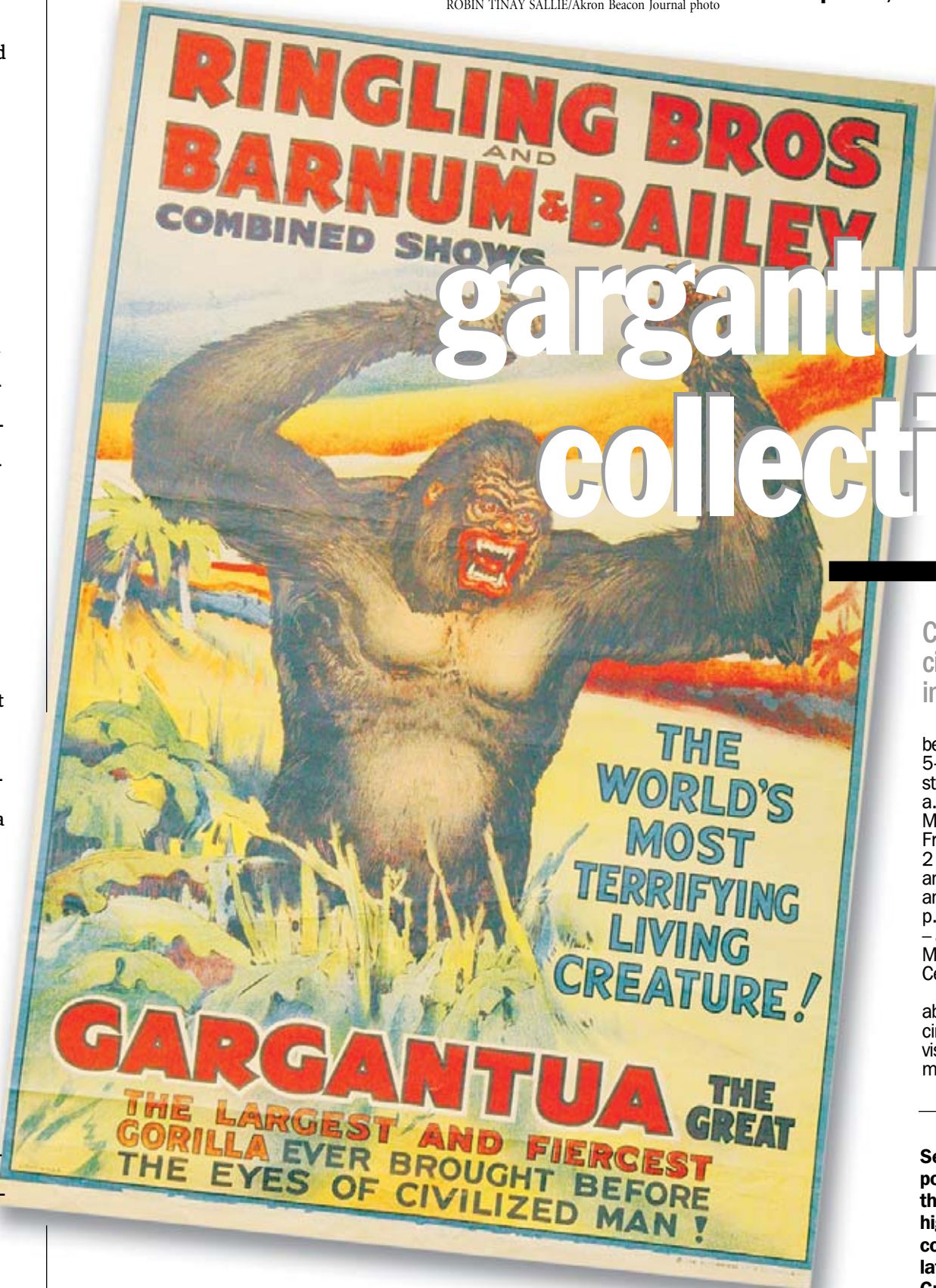
Please see **Giffels, B4**

Part of Eva Grover's large circus collection is on display at Chase & Co. Ministries in Seville. The collection was amassed by Grover's late husband.



ROBIN TINAY SALLIE/Akron Beacon Journal photo

Plans for garage sale derailed when broker discovers hard-to-find antiques, collectibles



gargantuan collection

Check out circus stuff in Seville

The items will be on display Sept. 5-Oct. 7 during store hours - 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays and Fridays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesdays and Saturdays, and 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesdays - at Chase & Co. Ministries, 9066 Center St., Seville. For information about the Grover circus collection, visit www.chaseministries.org.

Several rare posters, including this classic, highlight the collection of the late Rev. Robert E. Grover Sr.

Valuable treasures found amid vast assemblage of circus memorabilia

By Jim Carney
Beacon Journal staff writer

Eva Grover should have seen it coming.

On her first date with her future husband, the Rev. Robert Grover Sr., in 1947, they went to the circus in Kingston, Pa.

"Life was always a circus after that," said Eva Grover, of Lodi.

This summer, more than a dozen years after her husband's death, she found herself looking at a basement full of circus memorabilia her husband had collected over the years, wondering how to get rid of it all.

Grover said her husband, a retired United Methodist minister who was 76 when he died in 1994, urged her to sell the circus items at a garage sale or auction once he died.

Eva Grover

She visited Paul Eash, an eBay

broker in Seville, and told him about the large collection.

Eash said he couldn't believe his eyes when he saw the items.

The basement was jam-packed with colorful circus posters from the 1920s through the 1960s, tickets and booklets, as well as hundreds of black-and-white photographs and negatives taken by Robert Grover. There was even a full miniature circus.

Eva Grover, 78, contacted Eash because her son, Robert Grover Jr., had read a story in the newspaper about a pair of 500-year-old carved church finials that Eash had placed for auction on eBay this summer. An unsuspecting Wadsworth couple had brought the carvings to him to sell on eBay, not knowing they had been stolen from a church in England.

Robert Grover Sr. first went to a circus at age 4 and the next year went to a circus by himself, his widow said.

After they were married, she said, they would often go to the circus or take detours off the scheduled route to a vacation spot to visit a circus.

So far, Eash said, he has sold about 18 items from the collection. Among them was an 1879 W.W. Cole Circus cane inscribed with the names of the towns where the circus stopped. It sold for \$489.

Another item was a scrapbook of circus newspaper clippings that sold

for \$493.

The item that drew the most money was an 1899 Buffalo Bill Wild West Show program that sold for \$699, Eash said.

Nearly all of the rest of the Grover collection will be sold in eBay auctions through April, Eash said. Some posters in the collection could sell for \$10,000 to \$15,000 each, he said.

Eash believes the collection may ultimately bring in about \$200,000. He has put some of the items on display at his store, Chase & Co. Ministries, at 9066 Center St. in Seville.

A miniature circus is set up on a table. Colorful circus posters, plus black-and-white posters from the mid-19th century, are displayed on the wall.

Grover said she still has no explanation for her husband's fascination with the circus.

"It wasn't for many years that I knew he was harboring this disease," she said with a big smile.

Robert Grover Jr., 53, pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship in Medina, said the hobby was a way for his father to relax.

"That was his stress buster in life," he said.

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Summit elections budget falls short

County board says it needs extra \$1.7 million to cover increased costs

By Lisa A. Abraham
Beacon Journal staff writer

The Summit County Board of Elections can't afford stamps.

It needs more than a book of stamps, however - \$67,000 more. The postage is needed to comply with a new state law that requires notices to be mailed to all registered voters telling them about a new requirement to show a formal identification before they can vote.

The stamps are just one of the purchases for which the board has no money. The board has been blowing through its allotted 2006 budget faster than it did in 2004 - the presidential election year when rampant voter registration drives resulted in overtime for board employees.

But now the Summit County administration wants to know where all the money is going.

Linda Phelps, the county's director of budget and finance, sent the board a list of questions this week trying to determine why it needs an extra \$1.7 million. She had projected the board would need \$800,000 more.

Phelps said she is shocked at how fast the money was spent.

In 2004, the board spent \$4.5 million and in 2005, just over \$4 million. The board's budget for this year was \$4.3 million - more than \$3 million of which is already spent. The \$1.7 million more the board says it needs would amount to a \$6 million increase over last year's spending, which Phelps said is untenable.

"No one else got that large of a budget increase," she said.

Please see **Elections, B4**

Election foe says official abused calls

Stark County dispute centers on cell phone

By Rick Armon
Beacon Journal staff writer

The Democratic candidate for Stark County commissioner charged Wednesday that incumbent Richard Regula has used his county-owned cell phone for personal business, and he wants a probe by the county prosecutor.

Regula, though, called the complaint politically motivated and said he has no problem with an investigation.

Todd Bosley, a Nimishillen Township trustee and the Democratic commissioner candidate, obtained two years' worth of cell phone records through a public records request and released them to the media. The records show some conversations between Regula and one of his campaign supporters, and between the commissioner and a Washington, D.C., businessman who sued Bosley's private company, Ohio Discount Merchandise, in federal court for fraud.

Regula, a Republican completing his first four-year term, made no effort to reimburse the county for the calls, according to county records. County policy states that anyone making personal calls with a county-owned phone will be charged 13 cents a minute and excessive use may result in the phone's being taken away.

"There is no reason that Stark County taxpayers should be paying for Richard Regula to make and receive calls on a lawsuit that he's not involved in," Bosley said. He also questioned whether Regula was part of an effort to discredit him through the suit - an allegation that Regula says isn't true.

Regula carries two cell phones - one for personal use and one for county business. He

Please see **Cell, B4**



KAREN SCHIELY/Akron Beacon Journal

Rachel Rice, daughter of Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition CEO Daniel Rice, plays near the Richard Howe House. The house is to be used as a towpath visitor center.

Fund to renovate historic home grows

Richard Howe House will be visitor center

Beacon Journal staff report

The campaign to save Akron's oldest brick structure has raised two-thirds of the \$1.5 million it needs for the restoration, scheduled to begin later this year or early next year.

The Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition has raised \$1.04 million so far, mostly from foundations and corporations, to restore the Richard Howe House, trustees chairman Chris Burn-

ham said at Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic's weekly news conference Wednesday.

Burnham said the coalition will proceed with the renovation and is confident it can raise the additional money.

However, the coalition needs to raise another \$1 million for an endowment to support the renovated house at South High and East Exchange streets, which will serve as a visitor information center for the towpath hike-and-bike trail and coalition headquarters.

The private, nonprofit organization promotes the develop-

ment of the Ohio & Erie Canal Heritage Canalway, the federal historic corridor that stretches 110 miles from Cleveland through Akron and Canton to New Philadelphia.

Richard Howe, an engineer who supervised completion of the Ohio & Erie Canal from Cleveland to Massillon between 1825 and 1832, built the Federal-style home in 1836.

The original home is obscured by wrap-around additions. It has been a grocery store, restaurant, antique store and tattoo parlor. The city bought it in 1998.