



Language Barrier A storefront in a strip mall on the east side of Carpentersville reflects the town's changing population, which is now estimated to be 40 percent Hispanic. Opposite: Another side of Carpentersville.
Photographs by Paul D'Amato

a slate calling itself the All American Team won seats on the



Our Town

In the Illinois town of Carpentersville,

village board by vowing to crack down on illegal immigrants.

Now all sorts of people don't feel at home.

By Alex Kotlowitz



The All American Team Judy Sigwalt and Paul Humpfer ran for the Carpentersville board of trustees on an anti-illegal-immigrant ticket, and won. A prime legislative goal: to make English the village's official language.

When I first met with Judy

Sigwalt and her fellow village trustee Paul Humpfer this past April, they were, understandably, feeling assured, if not emboldened. A few weeks earlier, with the endorsement of the two local newspapers, they were elected to their village board on the platform that their town, Carpentersville, Ill., should do everything in its power to discourage illegal immigrants from settling there. They vowed to pass a local ordinance that would penalize landlords that rented to illegal aliens and businesses that hired them. They also pledged to make English the official language of the village, which would mean discontinuing the practice of printing various notices — including building-code violations and the monthly newsletter — in both English and Spanish. The third candidate on their slate also won, giving them a majority on the board. Sigwalt and Humpfer considered their election a mandate. Indeed, many in this village consider them heroes. Their supporters wear buttons that read, “Illegal Means Illegal,” and: “I’m tired. Are you? Ask Me Why!” with a sickly looking bald eagle wrapped in the American flag.

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At that first gathering, we sat at Sigwalt’s dining-room table, trying to keep our voices down because the four toddlers whom Sigwalt cares for as part of her day-care business were taking their afternoon nap. “People feel like they’re not in their town,” Humpfer told me. “They feel alienated.” In the 1990s, the texture of the town changed significantly. An estimated 40 percent of its 37,000 residents are Hispanic, a jump from 17 percent in 1990. And this has not sat well with everyone. Humpfer and Sigwalt insist that their stance has nothing to do with this demographic shift but rather with the contingent of undocumented immigrants living in the town. There’s no way to measure the actual numbers, but it’s probable that a sizable portion of the Hispanic population living in Carpentersville is without papers. (Nationwide, the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that one-fifth of all Latinos are here without proper documents.) One priest at St. Monica, a local Roman Catholic church, estimated that more than half of the 3,500-member congregation is here illegally. “The American taxpayer,” Sigwalt told me, “is becoming secondary in their own country.”

Sigwalt and Humpfer have become inseparable, at least politically, and people refer to them together in one breath as if they were a theatrical act, like Penn & Teller or Siegfried & Roy. Sigwalt, who is 54, is short and square-shouldered. With her close-cropped haircut and scolding manner, she can come across as a stern, no-nonsense schoolteacher. Humpfer, who is 43 and an accountant at Zurich Financial Services, a Swiss-based company with operations in the U.S., seems less comfortable with all the attention. His sentences are often punctuated by a nervous, uneasy laugh. He has large, handsome features and a dark complexion; as a result, he’s often mistaken for being Latino, though he’s actually part American Indian. His maternal grandfather was Arapaho. “I don’t like that it turns into that I’m somehow against Hispanics,” Humpfer said. “I want to deal with the crime and the overcrowding in our town. And we’re doing anything we can to influence the outcome nationally.”

It's in places like Carpentersville where we may be witnessing the opening of a deep and profound fissure in the American landscape. Over the past two years, more than 40 local and state governments have passed ordinances and legislation aimed at making life miserable for illegal immigrants in the hope that they'll have no choice but to return to their countries of origin. Deportation by attrition, some call it. One of the first ordinances was passed in Hazleton, Pa., and was meant to bar illegal immigrants from living and working there. It served as a model for many local officials across the country, including Sigwalt and Humpfer. On July 26, a federal judge struck down Hazleton's ordinance, but the town's mayor, Lou Barletta, plans to appeal the decision. "This battle is far from over," he declared the day of the ruling. States and towns have looked for other ways to crack down on illegal immigrants. Last month, Prince William County in northern Virginia passed a resolution trying to curb illegal immigrants' access to public services. Waukegan, another Illinois town, has voted to apply for a federal program that would allow its police to begin deportation charges against those who are here illegally. A week after the Senate failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform, Arizona's governor, Janet Napolitano, signed into law an act

development, which, in the spirit of Long Island's Levittown, was built in the 1950s for returning war veterans who were looking to escape the crowded and increasingly expensive tenements of Chicago. These affordable and unadorned ranch homes (they can be bought for \$150,000), all roughly 1,000 square feet in size, have long lured first-time home buyers — first the war veterans and more recently first- and second-generation immigrants from Mexico. The town's proximity to Elgin, a small working-class city that has a sizable Latino population, has also been an attraction. Elgin, once the home of the Elgin National Watch Company, is still the site of some factories as well as a riverboat casino, and thus a number of entry-level jobs. In Carpentersville, Hispanics have mostly settled on the east side, and so that part of town is dotted with Mexican grocery stores, beauty salons, restaurants and bakeries. Along the river is the older part of the village, mostly white working-class families along with a smattering of small manufacturing firms and a cornfield, which is still harvested annually. To the west of the river lies the town's new wealth, a collection of labyrinthine subdivisions where home prices start at \$250,000 and can go for as much as a million dollars. Many of these residents work professional jobs at nearby corporations, like Sears and Motorola.

'I've gone into the Polish deli and the German deli, and they're so friendly,'
Judy Sigwalt says. 'When I go into the Hispanic grocery store, I feel like an intruder;
I feel unwelcome.'

penalizing businesses that knowingly hire undocumented immigrants. "One of the practical effects of this failure" to enact national immigration reform, Napolitano wrote to the Congressional leadership, "is that Arizona, and states across the nation, must now continue to address this escalating problem on their own." Admittedly, the constitutionality of many of these new laws is still in question, and some of the state bills and local ordinances simply duplicate what's already in force nationally. But with Congress's inability to reach an agreement on an immigration bill, the debate will continue among local officials like those in Carpentersville, where the wrangling often seems less about illegal immigration than it does about whether new immigrants are assimilating quickly enough, if at all. In Carpentersville, the rancor has turned neighbor against neighbor. Once you scrape away the acid rhetoric, though, there's much people actually agree on — but given the ugliness of the taunts and assertions, it's unlikely that will ever emerge.

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arpentersville is without a center. It has no downtown. It has no clear identity.

Forty miles northwest of Chicago, Carpentersville is a bit too far to be a commuter town and not distant enough to be a self-contained village. The town, which sprawls over seven and a half square miles, has grown without much planning, and feels less like a suburb than it does an adventure in navigation. The languid Fox River, which cuts through its midsection, is what orients. East of the river and west of the river have clear connotations.

To the east is the town's older housing stock, including a 6,000-house

It would be easy to live in Carpentersville and have nothing to do with people on the other side of the river, and as the number of Hispanics increased, most in town barely paid attention. People tell me that everyone got along reasonably well. Indeed, in 1999, the village leaders established the Hispanic Committee in the hope that they could help acculturate and celebrate the new arrivals. It encouraged Hispanics to participate in the 2000 census and registered newcomers to vote. Judy Sigwalt was a part of this committee.

Sigwalt describes herself as "just a Joe Blow who at 54 works 10 hours a day at a service job." Her husband is a diesel mechanic for Wonder Bread. Sigwalt was first elected a village trustee in 1999, and shortly afterward agreed to join the Hispanic Committee. For three summers, the committee was the host of Celebration Latina, a one-day festival of Mexican food and music. But Sigwalt said she believed that non-Hispanic residents in town did not want to attend such an ethnically specific festival, and so she urged a name change, to Community Pride Day. That year attendance dropped off from 2,500 to 500 people. Shortly afterward, the Hispanic Committee disbanded, but it all happened quietly, without much notice.

For 23 years, Sigwalt, along with her husband and her son, lived on the east side of town and watched as their neighborhood slowly changed. Hispanic families moved in. Her son's best friend, Eddie Morales, was the son of immigrants. The two were on the high-school wrestling team together, and Sigwalt would drive them to weekend matches. But Sigwalt told me she became terribly lonely. There was no one to have coffee with because so many of her neighbors didn't speak English, and so three years ago she and her family moved to a subdivision west of the river.

Last fall, Humpfer, who had initially been appointed to fill a vacancy on the village board, approached her about passing an ordinance similar to the one that had been proposed by the mayor of Hazleton. Humpfer had been upset by a couple of matters. A restaurant owner and his family, who were Hispanic, had been abducted from their nearby village to a home in Car-

pentersville. The six kidnapers, all members of a street gang, believed the restaurateur had a stash of drugs or cash, which they wanted. Everyone was eventually freed safely, but in the aftermath the newspapers reported that one of the kidnapers was here illegally. "It scares you," Humpfer told me. "It's just a matter of time before it ends up in my neighborhood." Around this time, Humpfer also learned that the village was having little success in collecting \$372,000 in ambulance fees. The collection agencies hired by the village were unable to locate many of the individuals with outstanding bills. A number of them had Spanish surnames, Humpfer said, and he concluded that many gave false addresses because they were without documents and so feared deportation.

Moreover, Humpfer and Sigwalt said that constituents had expressed dismay at the number of businesses in which the proprietors spoke only Spanish. "I've gone into the Polish deli and the German deli, and they're so friendly," Sigwalt said. "When I go into the Hispanic grocery store, I feel like an intruder; I feel unwelcome." Humpfer added, "It's gotten to a level where the number of illegals is so big, these stores can cater to only one culture."

So, together, Humpfer and Sigwalt introduced a Hazletonlike ordinance that would penalize landlords for renting to illegals and businesses for hiring them. At the next village meeting, more than 2,000 protesters showed up to denounce the ordinance. A number of them were from Chicago and Elgin, members of a club for people from the Mexican state of Michoacán,

tor on staff who offers English-language classes to employees; they won't receive pay increases unless they have achieved a certain proficiency. "If you learn the language, it's the first sign you're assimilating" he told me.

Otto is the town's largest employer, which gives Roeser stature in the community. The company designs and produces customized switches and audio products for NASA, the Air Force and the like, so its work force is a combination of highly skilled engineers and low-skilled assembly workers (most of the Hispanics are among the latter). According to Roeser, Otto's revenues last year were roughly \$77 million. Roeser, who's tall and lanky, is modest in his appearance, favoring khakis and open-collared shirts often with "Otto" stitched above the pocket. (He does, though, covet fancy wheels, driving an Aston Martin two-seater, which he parks in the lot along with his employees' pickups and older-model American-made cars.) The company was founded by his father, Jack, a conservative who started a political action committee, the Family Taxpayers Network, which takes on both fiscal and social issues, like high taxes and same-sex marriage; he has vigorously and successfully opposed at least two school referendums, criticizing what he considers out-of-control spending and overpaid teachers. Tom, too, is conservative — he told me he was hoping Newt Gingrich would seek the Republican presidential nomination — but he doesn't have the same political zeal as his father, who is semiretired from the company. As a result, people in town were surprised when he took on Humpfer and

Adam Ruiz considers himself
politically conservative, having voted for George Bush in the last two elections. A cautious
man, he doesn't fly the Mexican flag because, he told me,
'I don't want to cause problems.'

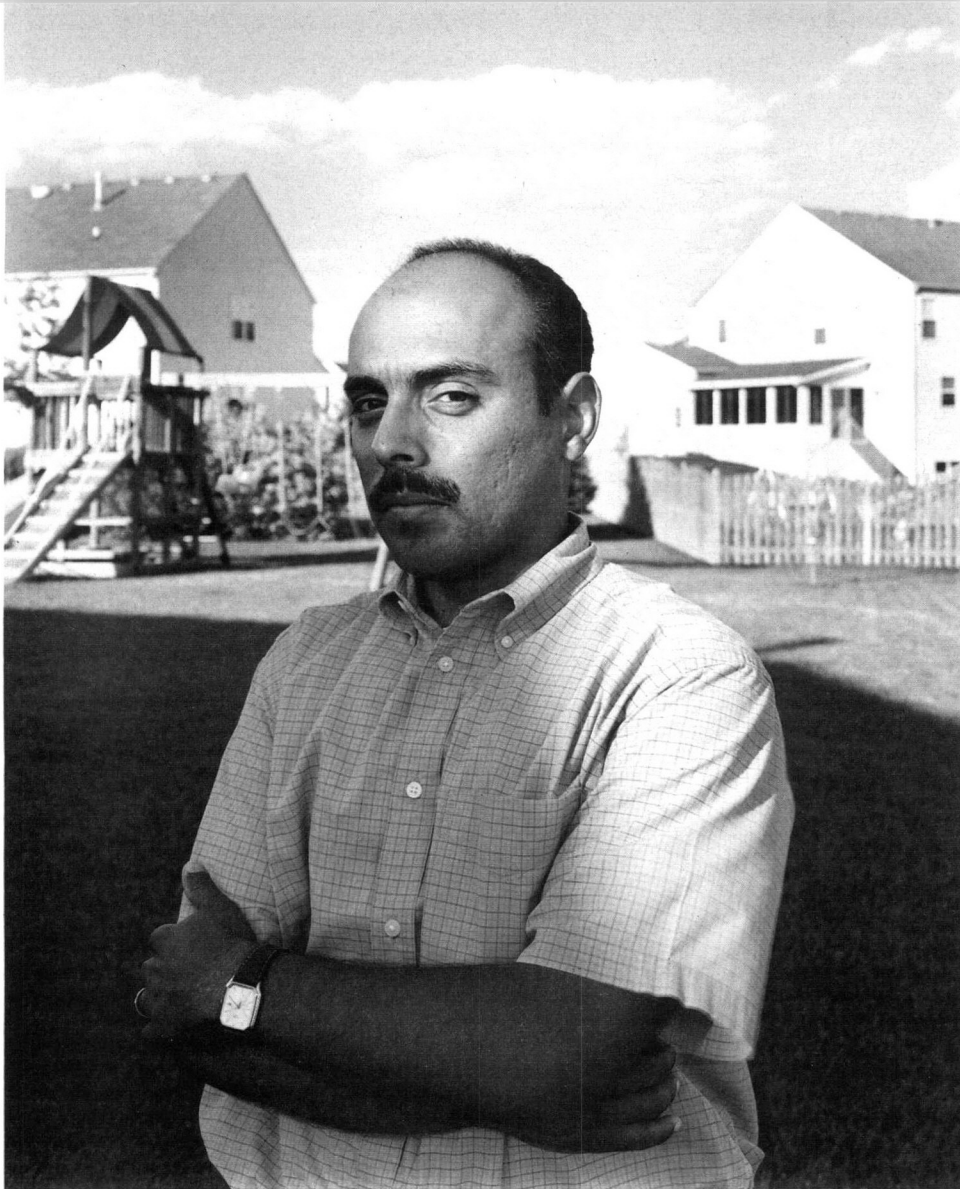
the original home of many in Carpentersville. Such a demonstration was unprecedented for this small town. The trustees tabled discussion of the ordinance that night because the village hall seats only 210 people, and they couldn't find a large enough space to accommodate everybody. (Since then, the village has purchased speakers, which are set up outside so that the proceedings can be heard by those who can't fit into the rotunda.) The rally made the Chicago newspapers, and it seemed to encourage Humpfer and Sigwalt as they, along with a first-time candidate, formed a slate to run in the coming election. They called themselves the All American Team.

During a tour of Otto Engineering, a family-run business, Tom Roeser, its president and owner, saw that I had noticed alarm signs, which were in both English and Spanish. "Those are going," he assured me. Roeser prohibits bilingual signs in his factory, and these signs, which had been put up by an outside cleaning company, didn't sit well with him. Nearly half of Otto's 502 employees are Hispanic, and Roeser insists that they learn English. Prospective hires must first pass a language test. He requires supervisors to give instructions in English. He also has a full-time instruc-

Sigwalt, and did so with an unusual bluntness. "They're bigots," Tom Roeser told me. "They're walking around like roosters."

About 12 years ago, Roeser began to see the ethnic makeup of his hourly work force, which is predominantly female, change. Initially the company hired a handful of recent Korean and Laotian immigrants; then Hispanics increasingly got jobs there. Roeser takes great pride in his relationship with his employees. Most call him by his first name. Each year, he gives them a picnic, and at the one I attended earlier this summer, Roeser knew the name of just about all the employees there, as well as their spouses. At a Christmas party in 1995, Roeser approached a group of assemblers and boasted of the family atmosphere at his company. One longtime employee, Darlene Hutchins, shook her head. "Tom," she said, "that's what you think, but there are people who are unhappy. Some of us older ones, we don't feel like we're being recognized for what we've done for this company." Hutchins, in recounting this moment, told me: "We were just uncomfortable because they" — the newer Hispanic hires — "seemed to get everything. We felt lost in the crowd."

In response, Roeser formed the Wise Owls Club, recognition for those at Otto for 15 years or more. He gave away Wise Owls shirts and sponsored an annual luncheon. It was a small gesture, but Roeser realized he had to retain his older employees, most of whom were white and all of whom would soon be in the minority, while also trying to assimilate his newer Hispanic workers or, as he puts it, "Ottoize" them. This is essential to Roeser, and he maintains it is at the heart of the contentiousness in Car-



Second Generation Adam Ruiz, whose parents are Mexican, wants to be part of the Carpentersville community but says he feels “branded because I have dark skin.”

pentersville: that longtime residents don't trust that their new neighbors are becoming Americanized fast enough.

Hispanics, Roeser told me “are more social. They're more in your face. So if you live next door to a Hispanic, they probably have more levels of family living there. I'll call it overcrowding. They may live in a low-income house, so they have only one bathroom, and the men go outside and urinate on the tree. You live next door to this family, and you don't like that the man urinated outside, and you don't like the fourth car in the front yard. And you don't like the loud music and the picnicking, and so what you say is they must be a bunch of damn illegals. But once they're all legal, you still have the same problem. You need to assimilate them.” And for Roeser, the quickest way to assimilation is to learn the language, which is why he's so insistent that his company not operate in both Spanish and English. English, you might say, is the official language of Otto.

As with many, Roeser's thinking about immigration is complicated and at times conflicted, infused with a sense of American practicality, compassion and nationalistic pride. For instance, he won't allow employees to hang a Mexican flag in the plant, and he refused to allow employees who wanted to attend a large immigration march in Chicago to take the day off. On the other hand, he celebrates Cinco de Mayo every year by bringing in two mariachi bands, one for each cafeteria, and a catered Mexican lunch. (He's quick to tell me that he has also arranged for festivities on St. Patrick's Day and Casimir Pulaski Day.) At this year's Cinco de Mayo celebration, which I attended at Roeser's invitation, Roeser took the hand of one of

his assembly-line workers — she was wearing a T-shirt that read, “Kiss Me, I'm Mexican” — and pulled her onto the floor to dance. Soon others joined in. Those along the walls and at the tables cheered them on, as this tall, gangly white man dressed in loafers, chinos and a green plaid shirt clapped his hands together with some semblance of rhythm along with six Hispanic women, most wearing flowing peasant dresses and adorned in red and green ribbons.

Roeser is an engineer by training, and if there's one thing he hates, it's inefficiency. He saw Humpfer and Sigwalt's proposed ordinances as just plain bad management. While Otto, he says, already screens new hires for false papers (it refined its process after the Immigration and Naturalization Service performed an inspection 11 years ago and found 30 workers with false documents), the proposed ordinance would be especially tough on smaller businesses and landlords. Moreover, he was concerned that if the village stopped translating official notices into Spanish, some residents wouldn't abide by local regulations.

Roeser considers himself an exceptionally rational decision maker. But it became clear as we spent time together that he took great satisfaction in getting to know the Hispanics who work for him. He has come to know their travails and at times has offered a hand. A number of years ago, Antonia Garcia, who was a supervisor, came to Roeser for help. Her teenage daughter had stopped going to school, and she wondered if he might give her a job at the factory. Roeser told her, sure, he'd hire her, and put her on the assembly line next to “a big, fat, smelly man” in the hope that she'd find the work so distasteful that she'd return to school. (She did eventually quit.) When the I.N.S. audited Otto in 1995, one employee who had used false papers to get hired told Roeser that she was a permanent resident but had gotten

caught up in a bureaucratic tangle. Roeser hired an attorney to help her.

The southeast corner of Carpentersville, which is mostly Hispanic, is particularly blighted and overcrowded; that upset Roeser. He tried to persuade Habitat for Humanity to come in, but they told him they don't do renovations, so over the past couple of years, Roeser has bought 20 town houses that he then fixed up. He rents the houses to employees for \$600 a month, which according to a local real estate agent is well below the market rate. He also purchased a nearby restaurant to keep it from being converted into a tavern.

Roeser's wife, Betty, who disagrees with his stand against Humpfer and Sigwalt, often teases him. “What is it about ‘illegal’ that you don't understand?” she'll ask him. She told me that he has a soft spot for his Hispanic workers. “He's biased,” she said, “because he has so many good Hispanic workers, and he'd be hurting without them.” (When I told Roeser what his wife said, he took exception. “It's my objective view,” he insisted, “and not the biased view of someone who owns a company that hires a lot of Hispanics.”)

The presence of a large, low-skilled work force has undoubtedly allowed places like Otto to keep wages low. A beginning assembler at Otto earns \$7.65 an hour plus profit sharing, which averages to seven weeks of pay each year. I asked Darlene Hutchins, the woman who inspired the formation of the Wise Owls Club, what she earned. She looked away. “My children laugh at me,” she muttered. After 28 years, she makes “a little over \$10 an hour” plus, she was quick to add, a health care plan, a 401(k) savings plan, profit sharing and a \$200 bonus for perfect attendance. Roeser defends his pay

scale, contending that it's comparable with what other area factories pay if not actually more.

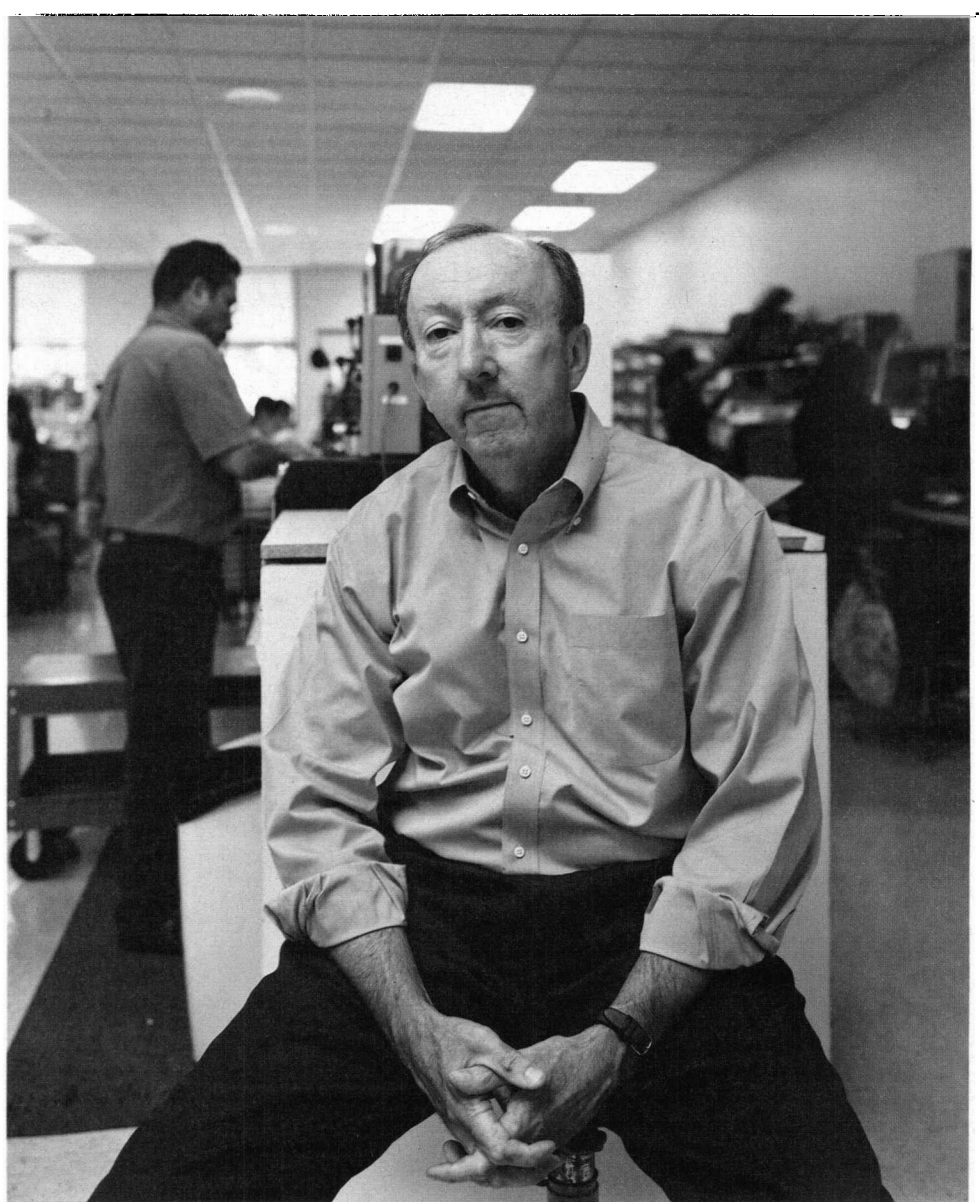
Roeser became so distressed by Humpfer and Sigwalt's proposals that for the first time in his life he became involved in a local election. He interviewed potential candidates who he thought could defeat them. He mailed two letters to residents urging them to vote for his preferred candidates. He registered voters at his factory and sponsored a political forum there. He sent letters to the editor. And he helped finance one candidate's campaign. Humpfer, Sigwalt and their supporters suggested in media interviews and letters to the editor of the local paper that Roeser's interest in this was financial: they insinuated that he hired illegals and that just the presence of undocumented workers in the area kept his wages down. "A lot of my constituents have brought the question to me: What is he hiding?" Sigwalt told me. "I don't want to get my butt in a ringer, but I wonder what ICE" — the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency — "would find if they went in there."

It was a rancorous campaign on both sides. Opponents dug up a two-year-old case in which Humpfer supposedly struck his wife, and a supporter of the opposing (and losing) slate was arrested for tearing down political signs. Tensions were so high that the Department of Justice sent agents to monitor the voting.

A month before the April election, Roeser received two anonymous voice-mail messages, providing details suggesting that one of his favorite employees was in fact here illegally and had used false documents to get hired. "You have a person working there with illegal papers," the caller said. "She is in the audio department. ... You'd better be careful because you're into politics and this may affect you." The second message was more threatening: "Do something about it today or tomorrow, immigration will be in there." Roeser knew he was in the spotlight, so he instructed his human-resources manager to re-examine the papers of all Otto employees and confronted the employee in question. She admitted that she had used her sister's Social Security card and driver's license. The employee had worked at Otto for nine years and had been taken to the United States by her parents when she was a baby. Roeser felt obligated to let her go, especially given all the attention on him and his factory. He told his human-resources manager, "The witch hunt's begun."

Word got around about the woman's firing from Otto, and an already anxious Hispanic population became even more so. Over the past two years, the town police helped Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers arrest and deport 45 illegal immigrants, who had been charged with serious felonies or with being active gang members. In December, the trustees — led by Sigwalt and Humpfer — directed the Police Department to apply for a federal program in which local police officers would be trained in how to inquire about an arrested person's legal status and to initiate deportation proceedings. A new police effort to ticket motorists not wearing seat belts also fueled rumors that the police were out to deport illegal immigrants. When the roadblocks go up on the east side's main thoroughfare, neighbor tells neighbor, and those without documents stay off the road.

Many of the Hispanic residents I spoke with achieved citizenship as a result of the national amnesty offered in 1986, but they'd grown up in households where their parents instructed them to be measured and cautious in



The Boss Tom Roeser, the president and owner of Otto Engineering, the largest employer in town. Half his work force is Hispanic, and he has taken a stand against anti-immigrant proposals.

their activities. That may, in part, have accounted for the low voter turnout in Carpentersville. Indeed, early on, Roeser told me he was "surprised the Hispanic citizens didn't get more vocal, saying, 'This is our town too.'" But some of that changed when, the day before the election, 2,000 families in town received a flier. It read, in part:

*Are you tired of waiting to pay for your groceries while Illegal Aliens pay with food stamps and then go outside and get in a \$40,000 car?
Are you tired of paying taxes when Illegal Aliens pay NONE!
Are you tired of reading that another Illegal Alien was arrested for drug dealing?
Are you tired of having to punch 1 for English?
Are you tired of seeing multiple families in our homes?
Are you tired of not being able to use Carpenter Park on the weekend, because it is over run by Illegal Aliens?
Are you tired of seeing the Mexican Flag flown above our Flag?
If you are as tired as me then let's get out and Vote for the: All American Team ... Finally a team that will help us take back our town!*

This tract, which was sent out by a key supporter of Sigwalt and Humpfer, and with the knowledge of Humpfer, became a marker of sorts, a moment when the wedge was driven so deep (one resident told me, "It's kind of like the Grand Canyon") that there would be no easy reconciliation. Most Hispanics didn't learn of the flier until after the election, but it so offended

many of them — especially those who were American citizens and had a foothold in the middle class — that even those who'd never been politically active began heading out to the village meetings to gauge firsthand the mood of their neighbors. What so alarmed them is that it felt less like a debate on illegal immigration than it did a condemnation of Hispanic culture.

When I first met with Sigwalt and Humpfer, Sigwalt retrieved two items from a kitchen drawer. One was a photograph she had taken of four trash cans filled with household junk. Planted in one of them was an American flag. Sigwalt told me that these were the remnants of a family who felt forced to move because of the changes in town, and that the flag was a symbol of surrender. "You have Americans giving up on their own country," she declared. She then pulled from a small plastic bag a wall socket that was charred, the plastic melted. She told me that the previous occupants of the house she moved into three years ago were four Hispanic families and that the overcrowding led to an overload of the electrical circuitry. "This," she said, holding up the burned wall socket, "is what's going on in town here."

The charred socket has become a totem for Sigwalt and Humpfer, symbolizing all that they believe has gone awry in Carpentersville: overcrowded homes and schools, rising crime, blighted neighborhoods and residents who speak little or no English. (They complain about the public announcements in Spanish at the local Wal-Mart and Sears.) For them, it boils down to this: many Mexican immigrants are reluctant to adopt the American cul-

ologist at the time, wrote in *The Century Magazine*, "That the Mediterranean peoples are morally below the races of Northern Europe is as certain as any social fact." But as the new immigrants had children and grandchildren, the once-new arrivals became a part of mainstream culture (influencing it, as well) and, notably, spoke English fluently.

Becoming integrated into another culture is a dynamic process, and one that is undergoing a fresh debate given the most recent wave of immigrants, primarily from Latin American and Asia. After the last large migration to the country — of Italians, Slavs and Poles — there was a political outcry, and in the early 1920s, Congress placed severe restrictions on immigration. It wasn't until the Immigration Act of 1965 that the gates once again fully opened. Since 1970, according to the Department of Homeland Security, an estimated 27 million foreign-born people have received legal permanent-resident status in the U.S.

There are essentially three camps on the assimilation question, which I would describe, albeit simplistically, as the pessimists, the optimists and the cautious optimists. The pessimist camp includes self-proclaimed populists like Lou Dobbs, who see few parallels between the present-day migration from Mexico and the surge of Italians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. "We are a melting pot," Dobbs said on one of his many broadcasts on immigration. "And while our pot is full, and looks as though it's going to get fuller unless we do something about it, we are not melting." The intellec-

A couple of months before the election, Tom Roeser received two anonymous voice-mail messages, providing details suggesting that one of his favorite employees was in fact here illegally. He told his human-resources manager,

'The witch hunt's begun.'

ture. "They want the American dream, but they don't want to assimilate," Sigwalt told me. "Immigrants are what made this country great, but the immigrants of yesterday and the immigrants of today are totally different people. They don't have the love of this country in their hearts."

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hen Italians came here in the late 19th century and early 20th century, nativist Americans chafed at the new arrivals' inability — or in the eyes of some, their unwillingness — to master English, language being the most visible and tangible measure of whether an immigrant group is becoming American. In 1919, shortly before his death, Theodore Roosevelt wrote, "We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, and American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house; and we have room for but one soul loyalty, and that is loyalty to the American people." Many suggested back then that the Italians were fundamentally different from previous immigrant groups, that they would live only among their own, that they'd frequent only their own stores, that they couldn't speak English. Edward A. Ross, a prominent soci-

tual force behind such thinking is Samuel P. Huntington, a Harvard professor, whose 2004 book, "Who Are We?" makes the argument that Mexicans — unlike the earlier immigrants from Europe — don't subscribe to what he calls the nation's Anglo-Protestant values and so have not become Americanized, instead forming their own social and linguistic enclaves. "There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society," he writes. "Mexican-Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English."

The optimists suggest that like the Eastern and Southern Europeans before them, second- and third-generation Mexicans will master English and become quite American in their behavior and customs. (And, of course, influence the culture, as well.) According to the U.S. census, 40 percent of Mexicans in this country are foreign-born, or in other words are first-generation and, like new immigrants before them, have not been particularly proficient at acquiring a new language. Numerous studies have indicated that for their children, English becomes the primary form of communication. A survey published in the journal *Population and Development Review* found that by the third generation, nearly all Mexican immigrants speak only English at home. Another study, by Roger Waldinger, a sociologist at U.C.L.A., found that while 42 percent of first-generation Mexicans have at least a high-school diploma, 83 percent of second-generation Mexican immigrants do. Speaking of Dobbs and others, Waldinger suggests, "What they're seeing is a lot of people who speak Spanish and live among themselves, but what they're not seeing, because it hasn't hap-

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pened yet, is what happens to the children.”

And then there are the cautious optimists, a small but influential group of scholars who have been studying the influx of Mexicans into this country for years. They argue that many Mexican immigrants are indeed ambivalent about Americanization, and that upward assimilation and downward assimilation are happening at the same time, something they call “segmented assimilation.” They suggest that becoming an American can have both positive and negative repercussions, depending on what aspects of this culture you acquire. For instance, studies conducted by the sociologists Rubén Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes indicate that as immigrant children become more like Americans, not only do they learn English, but they also spend less time on homework, their blood cholesterol rises, divorce rates go up and levels of incarceration increase. They become more like native-born Americans in those ways, too. Moreover, Mexicans may well experience discrimination, which limits their options.

Mexican migration long had a distinct pattern:

Alejandro Portes of Princeton suggests that many immigrants settle here reluctantly, with little interest in identifying as Americans. Nonetheless, he says, ‘If they have children, they will become Americans.’

Mexicans would make two or three trips to the U.S., each lasting several months to a year, so that they could earn enough money to, say, purchase a home in Mexico. (Interestingly, by some estimates, nearly half of the Italians who arrived at the turn of the last century returned to Italy.) Portes suggests for many now here legally, their intent, like their predecessors’, was to come here only temporarily and then return home. But as border security has tightened, it has become more dangerous and more expensive to make those round trips, and so they have settled here reluctantly, with little interest in identifying as Americans. (I remember Humpfer at one point telling me, “I think there are some who are not trying to become Americans.”) Nonetheless, says Portes, who heads Princeton University’s Center for Migration and Development, “If they have children, they will become Americans.” Rocio, a woman I met in Carpentersville, was frustrated that her husband wouldn’t speak English in their home. Rocio, who would speak on the condition that her last name not be used, was born in this country; both her parents immigrated from Mexico, and Rocio learned English when she began school. Her husband, on the other hand, came here illegally 13 years ago at the age of 15, and he worries that he could at any point face deportation. So he didn’t see the sense in fully investing in becoming American. But that changed with the birth of their daughter. She just entered daycare, where she’s learning English, and so Rocio’s

husband has agreed to speak English at home, and now for the first time has asked Rocio for help in learning the language.

I first met Adam Ruiz, a second-generation Mexican-American, at a gathering at the village hall. The village president, Bill Sarto, who along with the lone Hispanic trustee had taken on Humpfer and Sigwalt, invited an immigration lawyer and the former director of Chicago’s I.N.S. field office to answer questions about immigration policy. The former I.N.S. official warned the 50 residents in attendance that with all the local and state laws being introduced around the country, “my concern is that we’re going to have a Tower of Babel of regulations across the landscape.”

Sigwalt sat on the edge of her chair, fuming. She and Humpfer had, for the time being, chosen to table their proposed ordinances until the courts ruled on the one passed in Hazleton. They didn’t want the town to incur the costs of a lawsuit. But they continued to push the town to adopt English as its official language. “The country has been crying out loud and clear as to what they want,” she heatedly responded. “As far as the law, I don’t expect to get out of a parking ticket. The Ameri-

can people are angry. ... While illegal aliens are looking for their dreams, the American people are losing theirs.” Her comments were met with applause. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a man who looked to be Hispanic shaking his head. The man, who turned out to be Ruiz, strode out of the room and in the hallway sought out a police officer. I got up and followed him. He was clearly shaken. He explained to me and the police officer that as he had entered the village hall, a man with his young daughter in tow told him, “This is a white man’s meeting.”

Ruiz, I learned, is a product manager for a large communications company and lives in one of the newer subdivisions, among predominantly white families. A neighbor had showed him the flier. “I was hurt,” he said. “It was just mean. ... I thought, Why are you picking on Mexicans?” Ruiz, as did others, said he believed the flier had less to do with illegal immigrants and more to do with Hispanics, illegal or not. “I feel like I’m branded because I have dark skin,” he told me.

Ruiz, who is 38, is by his own admission a bit of a nerd. He’s balding, with a slight overbite, and he considers himself politically conservative, having voted for George W. Bush in the last two elections. A cautious man, he doesn’t fly the Mexican flag because, he told me, “I don’t want to cause problems.” Like virtually all of the Hispanics in Carpentersville I spoke with, he has a border story. His father crossed into the U.S. illegally when he was 12, entering with an uncle to pick cotton.

He eventually was selected for a worker-visa program to pick strawberries in Southern California, then followed a family member to Indiana, where he landed a well-paying job at LTV Steel. Ruiz, who was born in the U.S. but didn’t learn English until he entered school, ended up matriculating at Purdue University, after which he met his wife, who was born in Mexico. They moved to Carpentersville four years ago with their four children, mostly because they could find a new five-bedroom home in their price range.

Ruiz began attending the village meetings this spring after he saw the flier, and at each he would speak during the public comments section. “Trustees Humpfer and Sigwalt, why do you only listen to your people?” he asked at one gathering. A month ago, he told me that he planned to send an e-mail message to his neighbors, informing them about the comments made at the board meetings, generally to let them know how he felt. But in the end, he chose not to send it. He told me that he and his wife are in a bowling league with 13 other couples, and only a few have said anything to him about the heated debate in town. “It bothers me,” he said. “But I’m not going to look for their favor.” Already, he has gotten the cold shoulder from one neighbor. His wife didn’t want him talking with me, in part because she fears for his safety, and in part because she doesn’t want to antagonize their friends.

Ruiz — like Sigwalt, Humpfer and Roeser — says that learning English should be a priority for new immigrants. “You need to be able to socialize and communicate,” he said. But he wouldn’t support the ordinance for English as an official language because of what he sees as the intent of its supporters. “They’re not trying to unite the people, they’re trying to divide the people,” he told me. “And they did it. They divided the community even more.”

As I spoke with Ruiz and other Hispanics in Carpentersville, it became clear that they wanted many of the same things that Sigwalt and Humpfer want: safe, clean neighborhoods and good schools. In fact, one woman I met, Antonia Garcia, the woman whose daughter Tom Roeser assisted, moved out of Carpentersville because she was displeased with the large class sizes at the schools and tired of the noise from neighboring homes with two or three families. It should also come as no surprise that there are divisions within the Hispanic community about immigration, especially between generations. I visited with the Morales family, whose son, Eddie, was best friends with the Sigwalts’ son. They live in a one-story ranch house just down the street from the Sigwalts’ old place, a part of town where the lawns are manicured, the homes well cared for. Paula Morales, who crossed into the U.S. in 1968, at the age of 21, cleans for two families nearby in the prosperous town of Barrington. “Judy’s my friend for a long time,” she told me. “It really hurts me.” She agrees with Sigwalt that some things need to change. She told me that across the street, there were 20 people living in a house no larger than hers, and that there were cars parked up *Continued on Page 57*

IMMIGRATION

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and down the street and loud music late into the night. But why not enforce housing codes, she suggests, recalling that when they first moved here in the 1980s, code enforcers would ticket homeowners who had too many people living in a house. Morales told me she asks herself, Did Judy always have these feelings? She and her son, who served eight years in the Army National Guard, then had a spirited discussion about whether it made sense to make English the official language of the village. "I see my mom's point of view, but I also see Judy's," Eddie said. "If you're going to try to make a living here, you should try to learn English."

Sigwalt and Humpfer's main arguments for ridding the town of illegal immigrants come down to this: their presence has led to both rising crime and overcrowded schools. As it turns out, however, the crime rate in Carpentersville has actually been cut in half over the past 10 years; and while the schools were, indeed, overcrowded four to five years ago (when Antonia Garcia moved her family out), class sizes have now been reduced — although it did require the passage of a tax referendum.

It is clear, though, that Sigwalt and Humpfer have had an impact. Hispanics are leaving town. On the east side, for-sale signs seem as ubiquitous as the cicadas that emerged this spring; the number of homes for sale has nearly doubled from the same time last year. While part of that may be a result of the slow housing market, real estate agents told me that some people say they want to leave town, either because they or a family member is illegal or simply because they feel unwelcome. Ruiz's father is selling a rental property because he doesn't want any problems from the village. One woman, Mireya Delgado-Aguilera, who has chosen to stay in town, at least for the time being, told me that she's considering sending her two children to a Christian school because she's concerned that the animus will spill over into the public schools.

When I last spoke with Tom Roeser, I asked him if anything was new. He sighed and told me that he just received a call from the Department of Labor informing him that it plans to audit his company's employment records, specifically checking to see if he has hired illegals. Roeser says he believes it's a direct result of the controversy. "I'm disappointed in the town," he told me. Given that one employee worked at Otto for nine years with false papers, it's very possible, Roeser says, that they'll find someone else, and he's already bracing himself for the local headlines and subsequent attacks. "I don't think they care about Carpentersville," he told me, speaking of Sigwalt and Humpfer. "They're demagogues." Roeser is probably closer to the two trustees on national immigration policy than he or they would like to think. He opposes granting any illegal immigrant citizenship — though he does maintain that if they've been here long enough and have been gainfully employed, then they should be allowed

to stay, just not as citizens. Humpfer, for his part, isn't sure what he would do with those who have been here for many years. Maybe, he says, if they have a good track record here, citizenship should be an option. "There are some people who want to deport every illegal alien," he told me. "I'm not sure I'm there. Not every one."

In June, I attended my final village board of trustees meeting. They had been long, coarse affairs (one went until 1:30 in the morning), and each has centered on the wrangling over immigration. At one meeting, a woman accused the town president of being psychologically deranged; at another, a resident pointed his finger at Humpfer and, referring to the reported altercation with his wife, tried to turn the tables, declaring, "Illegal means illegal."

The June gathering was particularly well attended — standing room only — because Humpfer and Sigwalt planned to introduce their ordinance, which would require village employees to use only English for official business. There were three television crews present and reporters from the local papers as well as from The Chicago Tribune. Police officers stood in the back of the room, a common sight at these gatherings. The town's trustees sat beneath the town's slogan: "Building a Better Tomorrow Today."

Carpentersville is very much a small town, and so the proceedings began with the promotion of two police officers, who, to the applause of everyone there, received their new badges. It was the only civil part of the evening. Adam Ruiz was the first to speak, and it quickly became clear that the rhetoric on both sides would be ratcheted up a notch. "They have made this about race," he said of Sigwalt and Humpfer, and then asked them to publicly denounce the flier that so agitated him and others. (The man next to me mumbled, "This is the United States of America; not a foreign country.")

One trustee, Kay Teeter, a soft-spoken Mary Kay cosmetics saleswoman, appeared agitated by the suggestions by Ruiz and others that supporting the proposed ordinance was the equivalent of dismissing Hispanics. "I am not a racist," she said. "We're a blue-collar people. My grandparents worked hard to assimilate and become Americans. What we're trying to do here is unite the community with a common language." Things quickly spiraled out of control. Two Hispanic women who had come with a contingent from Chicago rose from their seats and began chanting: "Viva la Raza. Viva la Raza." "Speak English," someone hollered. Two older men in the back row waved American flags. The women were ejected.

A week earlier, the town's department heads submitted an eight-page memo detailing how an English-only ordinance would hinder their jobs. "If officers are not allowed to speak in a foreign language," the police chief, David Neumann, wrote, "it will have a chilling effect on the Police Department's relationship with those who do not speak English, whether they reside here legally or not." So, Humpfer and Sigwalt chose,

instead, to propose a resolution which would be more a declaration of their beliefs than a set of regulations. (English-only ordinances or resolutions have passed or are pending passage in 35 municipalities and counties.)

Sigwalt seemed particularly taut, in large part because she was disappointed that they had to retreat from their original proposal. "The reason we don't have a unified country is because the second and third generations are not learning English," she lectured. "What is tearing our community apart is that there are so many different languages I can't interact with my neighbors anymore."

Sarto, the town president, who has continually sparred with Sigwalt, got in the last word: "Passing this ordinance is not going to make one person learn English any faster," he said. "All it will say is this: 'This is not a welcoming community.' The immigration problem is not going to be solved here in Carpentersville."

Despite this plea, the English-only resolution passed by a vote of 5 to 2. Undaunted by the Hazleton decision, Humpfer and Sigwalt intend to reword and reintroduce the ordinance that would penalize landlords for renting to illegal immigrants and businesses for hiring them in the coming weeks. They also plan to look for outside legal help and check the insurance coverage in case of a lawsuit. ■

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

OF JULY 29, 2007

TH-TH-TH-THAT'S ALL FOLKS!

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