

China's coming 'glory days'

By JAY WEINER

It's time to wave the flag.

It's time to return to the glory days of empire, elite global status and nationalism. Enough of this getting kicked around by other smaller countries with no understanding of what motivates this nation and its people. There's a story to tell and a stage to expose it.

Stop everything and spontaneously chant — sports-like — in unison, the country's name.

No, not, "U-S-A! U-S-A!" on this Fourth of July weekend.

But "Go, Chi-na, Go! Go, Chi-na, Go!"

This is what University of Minnesota professor Doug Hartmann saw and heard during his recent trip to China, the nation of 1.3 billion people that's set to play host to the world and the Summer Olympics, beginning Aug. 8.

"You have a right to be proud of your country," Hartmann told me the other day over breakfast, a couple weeks removed from returning from his second trip to China in 14 months.

But, he said, in wide-ranging conversations with students, journalists and government officials, "they don't want to hear any criticisms, and there is no sense at all of the reasons why there might be criticism . . . They are very nationalistic."

His first visit to China with students in the spring of 2007 was dipped in the rhetoric and concepts of "humanism." Hartmann and colleague Christopher Isett even wrote a draft academic article titled, "Humanism Instead of Human Rights? The Challenge of Beijing 2008 to Olympic Idealism."



REUTERS

Enthusiastic volunteers for the Beijing Olympics cheer during a May rally as Chinese officials prepare to showcase their country next month. The Games will use 100,000 volunteers, with another 400,000 citizens providing services through the city.

In it, they address some key values and stated goals of the Games within Chinese society that are "humanist": the use of the Olympics for education and development in China; the hope for mutual understanding between peoples and nations, some domestic goals to stop spitting, learn English and reduce pollution.

"A year ago, I was far more sympathetic and forgiving," said Hartmann, a professor of sociology and co-chair of the department.

He still believes various humanist planks — if not a human rights plank — reside at the foundation of these Games. The "harmonious" Games is a widely used term in China.

But in his most recent trip, he saw an uglier, discordant side. Underneath that veil of humanism, Hartmann said, he witnessed a rampant nationalism that, Hartmann said, seems blind to history, deaf to the concerns of the West and unwavering in its arrogance towards Tibet. It's a nationalism that, he believes, if unchecked, could trigger demonstrations of xenophobia at Olympic venues that would run counter to any "humanist" notions.

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PART 2

150 Minnesota moments we'd just as soon forget

Compiled by MinnPost editors and writers

MinnPost's tribute to Minnesota's 150 years of statehood continues with 50 more examples of bad weather, wars, a boneheaded decision to drop a cartoon strip and other moments we'd just as soon forget. The series will conclude Friday, July 4. Lest we forget: Happy Sesquicentennial, Minnesota!

- 1940**
Nov. 11 — The Armistice Day Blizzard kills 49 people in Minnesota after temperatures suddenly plunge from the 60s to zero, winds gust to 32 mph and 16.8 inches of snow fall in 24 hours. (Mnsu.edu)
- 1943**
The Minnesota Legislature asks the federal government to set up a prisoner-of-war camp to replace the droves of workers joining the military in World War II. About 3,000 POWs were held in 21 camps between 1943 and 1945, according to "Uncle John's Bathroom Reader Plunges into Minnesota."
- 1945**
By the end of World War II, 6,278 Minnesotans lose their lives serving in the war effort.
- 1946**
Carey McWilliams, writing in a 1946 issue of the liberal journal *Common Ground*, describes Minneapolis as the most anti-Semitic city in the country. At the time, Jews were barred from membership in service clubs and trade unions.
- The Minnesota State Fair is canceled because of a polio epidemic. Linus and Snoopy, circa 1950
Linus and Snoopy, 1950
- 1949**
Editors at the St. Paul Dispatch and Pioneer Press decide to drop a cartoon strip called "Li'l Folks." Turns out the cartoonist named Sparky is actually Charles Schulz, who went on to great success with a revised version of the strip called "Peanuts."
- 1952**
April — More than 2,600 families are evacuated in the Upper Levee and portions of St. Paul's West Side after the Mississippi River shatters the flood stage record of 19.4 feet set in 1881. This time: 20.4 feet.
- 1953**
By the end of the Korean War, 688 Minnesotans have died in the fighting.
- The dismantling begins of one of the world's largest urban trolley systems with more than 500 miles of track connecting Stillwater with ferry boats on Lake Minnetonka and linking to trains traveling all the way to Northfield. Light rail, anyone?
- 1956**
June 9 — A military jet crashes in South Minneapolis, killing six people. Four days earlier, another jet crashed and killed a mother and daughter out for a look at the new Bloomington stadium.
- Homes in St. Paul's Swede Hollow immigrant neighborhood are burned after the city health department declares they are contaminated.
- 1958**
Cincinnati Royals player Maurice Stokes, in a March 12 game against the Lakers at Minneapolis Auditorium, falls hard on a drive to the basket. Days later, Stokes loses consciousness and falls into a coma for weeks. He is left a quadriplegic after being diagnosed with post-traumatic encephalopathy.
- Coya Knutson campaigning, circa
- 1955**
It's hard to imagine Bill doing this to Hillary: Andy Knutson helps sabotage a third term for his wife, Minnesota's first congresswoman, Coya Knutson, with the "Coya Come Home" campaign.
- 1959**
St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood, considered the heart of the black community, is demolished to make way for Interstate 94.
- 1960**
Businessman Bob Short moves the Minneapolis Lakers to Los Angeles.
- April 16 — Albert Lea rocker Eddie Cochran, of "Summertime Blues" fame, dies in a taxi accident while on tour in England. He was 21.
- Nov. 30 — Novelist Ernest Hemingway undergoes shock treatment for depression at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minn. He commits suicide in Idaho a few days after leaving Minnesota.
- 1961**
Early summer — For the first time, Dutch elm disease is found in Minnesota among trimmed branches of elms in St. Paul's Highland Park neighborhood.
- Demolition of the Metropolitan Building, with its fine wrought-iron interior, begins in Minneapolis.
- 1963**
St. Paul's most notorious crime case — the murder of Carol Thompson — rocks the couple's Highland Park neighborhood and inspires a yearlong media frenzy that produces near-daily developments as a botched murder-for-hire case unravels, implicating her husband, T. Eugene Thompson.
- 1964**
June 12 — In their first Minnesota appearance, the Rolling Stones flop badly, drawing only 283 fans to Danceland at Excelsior Park, when a promoter decides not to advertise the concert because of fears the event would produce a new round of fan-driven hysteria similar to Beatle-mania.
- Oct. 25 — Vikings defensive end Jim Marshall picks up a fumble but runs the wrong way into the opponent's end zone. He throws the ball out of bounds, scoring a safety for the San Francisco 49ers.
- 1965**
May 6 — Two F4 tornadoes hit Fridley, and 13 people die as six tornadoes touch down in the Twin Cities. For two weeks, St. Paul and Minne-
- apolis are on different times, when the capital city decides to join most of the nation by starting Daylight Saving Time. Minneapolis opts to follow the later date set by state law.
- 1967**
July 19 — Stone-throwing rioters, upset about racism, break windows and set fires along Plymouth Avenue in North Minneapolis.
- 1968**
U.S. Sen. Eugene McCarthy refuses to stand with Democratic presidential candidate Hubert H. Humphrey at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.
- 1970**
Super Bowl IV: Kansas City Chiefs, 23; Minnesota Vikings, 7.
- 1971**
The Monticello Nuclear Power Plant's tank of radioactive cooling water overflows, eventually reaching the Mississippi River.
- 1972**
Jan. 7 — Pulitzer Prize-winning poet John Berryman, suffering from alcoholism, jumps to his death from the Washington Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis.
- Jan. 23 — Minnesota Gopher basketball players beat up Ohio State players, hospitalizing their center, Luke Witte. Gopher players Corky Taylor and Rob Behagen are suspended for the remainder of the season.
- July 27 — Virginia Piper, wife of a retired investment banker, is kidnapped from her Orono home. The \$1 million ransom is paid and she is found in Jay Cooke State Park. Two men are arrested for the crime but eventually acquitted, leaving the case unsolved. Just \$4,000 of the ransom money was ever recovered.

Read more at www.minnpost.com.

Former 'CCOer Paul Douglas still living dream with WeatherNation



ROXANE BATTLE

Sitting in the sunny corner office of his new digs in Excelsior, Paul Douglas, 50, appears to be as relaxed as the light blue short-sleeved shirt and faded blue jeans he's wearing. He peers over a pair of readers at one of two computers — a laptop and a flat screen — on the desk in front of him, where there is also an assortment of neatly arranged framed photos.

The walls in his office are painted the color of roasted cashews, and behind him hangs a framed poster from the film "Twister." On another wall next to a large window is a black-and-white photo of Douglas and Hollywood director Steven Spielberg. In the films "Twister" and "Jurassic Park," Spielberg used weather graphics that Douglas created in the early 1990s with his first entrepreneurial venture, EarthWatch.

"Paul Douglas was the guy who invented 3-D weather graphics," said Dan Griese, a longtime friend and business colleague, and current meteorologist for Douglas' newest venture.

"I remember him telling me that he dreamed about [Earth-Watch]," said Douglas' 20-year-old son, Walt Kruhoeffer, who interns with his father — and, as one of my relatives might say, is the spittin' image of his dad (whose real name is Douglas Kruhoeffer). "He said he had a dream like he was flying under a hurricane."

And it seems that, just months after enduring a career nightmare, meteorologist Paul Douglas is still dreaming — and creating.

In less than 90 days after being laid off by WCCO as part of mandated corporatewide

cutbacks at CBS, Douglas has turned a daydream into reality.

"I remember sitting at WCCO saying, 'You know, I use this equipment on the air for nine minutes a day,'" he said. "The rest of the time it's collecting dust. In a perfect world instead of doing three shows a day, I'd be doing 40 shows a day for different markets for different needs.'"

Which is precisely what Douglas and a small team of meteorologists aim to do with the syndicated weather service called WeatherNation, which launched last month.

Silver lining

It's an idea Douglas says he's been noodling for decades.

"I almost launched this back in 1982 at WNEP-TV in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania," he said, emphasizing each call letter. "It would have cost between \$5- and \$7 million, relying on a backyard of satellite uplinks and transponder time, and at the time we thought it was just too expensive. Since then the cost of everything has come down."

Now, instead of \$5 or \$6 million, Douglas has spent just a million — so far — on cutting-edge weather forecasting technology. WeatherNation's 2,700-square-foot office features a 26-by-17-foot television studio equipped with half a dozen HD monitors, including a 65-inch high-definition plasma screen. There are ever-changing LED lights on black walls with metallic grates, and the floor tile looks like brushed gunmetal. It kind of reminds me of one of those control rooms in an espionage thriller film: dark and mysterious and filled with all sorts of high-tech bells and whistles.

And the amazing thing is, none of this existed three months ago.

"The silver lining [to being laid off from his TV gig] is that it allowed me to dive into the deep end faster with Todd and not dwell on the past but focus on the future," he said. Todd Frostad is his business partner, who has done well enough in tech-start-up companies and real-estate development to be able to retire early — at age 39.

Douglas met Frostad just a few months ago while looking for office space. He ended up setting up shop in a new office complex owned by Frostad and the two hit it off.

Frostad is not only a partner in WeatherNation, he is also CEO of another one of Douglas' projects, Singular Logic, a non-weather-related Internet start-up that allows customers to choose the ads they see online.

"After my 50th Cialis ad," says Douglas, "I remember turning to someone and saying, 'Duh, there has got to be a better way.'"

"Doug is the CEO of WeatherNation and is taking a day-to-day, hour-to-hour approach to develop the product that is WeatherNation," Frostad explains. "In the inverse I'm doing the same thing for developing the product for Singular Logic. I'm creating the vision on that side. So we take opposite roles on the two companies, but we are partners in both."

Life after TV

I connected with Douglas last April via e-mail, just days after he had been laid off. This time we talked face to face. And it's obvious Paul Douglas hasn't wasted any time getting on with life after TV.

"The past couple of months have been a lot like attending your own funeral," he said. "People say 'we miss you' — not everybody, I'm sure some people

are relieved — but some people come up and say 'Yeah, we miss you. Are you going to come back?' 'Are you going to work for a TV station?' And it's very flattering — and the short answer is no, not in the conventional sense where I take my lunch bucket off to a local TV station, show up and punch the clock. But I would love to be able to do something for one of the local television stations on their website, possibly on air. I'm certainly free and clear to do that.

MinnPost: Have you talked to anybody in town?

Paul Douglas: "We're starting to have those conversations. Nothing I can announce today, but the phone has rung. We'll see. Getting back on the air locally, if it happens, great. If not, I'll be OK."

MP: It's been almost three months since you were laid off. Does it still sting a bit?

PD: You know it's fading; you know, it's history and I'm not bitter. If it was a business decision and they were trying to save money, I get that. But it could have been handled more gracefully.

MP: Have you heard from any of your buddies over at 'CCO?

PD: Oh yeah, I'm in touch with [news anchors] Frank and Amelia and Dennis and Jeanette and Don. They're still good buddies. I miss seeing them. I tell people, and it's the truth, I miss interacting with my friends at the station. Do I miss being in that environment where every day the margins have come down and there is more pressure to cut cost? No, I don't miss that at all."

He pauses, then adds, "I want to believe, Roxane, things happen for a reason."

Want to add your voice?

If you're interested in joining the discussion by writing a Community Voices article, email Susan Albright at salbright@minnpost.com.

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This is, of course, just one man's opinion, but Hartmann is no close-minded yahoo. He is a progressive scholar and author of "Race, Culture, and the Revolt of the Black Athlete: The 1968 Olympic Protests and Their Aftermath." He's as thoughtful an observer of the sports scene in the Twin Cities as we get. He's also active in Gophers athletics as the chairman of the faculty oversight board.

Of course — and this is another man's opinion — it is not unusual to see nationalism rise in the host nation as an Olympics nears. U.S. President Ronald Reagan himself is a perfect example. No one better fanned the flames of nationalism than he during the 1984 election campaign against Walter Mondale at his home state's Los Angeles Olympics. Reagan rode those Games and their Opening Ceremonies for his political advantage.

I think, too, particularly, of the 1992 Barcelona Games, which were a three-week-long exercise in Catalan nationalism, a region of Spain long seeking recognition. That nationalism seemed harmless, even quaint.

And, of course, there's the nationalist Games of all time, the Berlin 1936 Games, Hitler's Olympics.

To be sure, the timing of Hartmann's most recent trip to Beijing and Shanghai was ripe for frank conversations with Chinese folks. Hartmann, Isett and students arrived in mid-May during the national days of mourning after the horrendous earthquakes. They chatted, too, with university students, journalists and others about the aftermath of the Tibet riots and crackdown and about the international disruption of the Olympic Torch Relay.

Hartmann was stunned by the disregard for the plight of Tibet and surprised by a lack of intellectual exchange on the reasons that Westerners and others might be challenging the Chinese.

He said much of the Chinese nationalism he heard expressed came from the urban middle and upper class that he and his students

would naturally come in contact with as they visited museums and Beijing city officials.

"These are the people who have really benefited from 10 to 15 years of unprecedented growth," he said. "These are whose people, whose families, were on farms 15 years ago before the great reforms. They can live like we live in Chicago, New York or L.A. ... They're running companies. They're not distinguishable from young urban professionals here."

He spoke of the exchange he and Isett had with a University of Minnesota grad student, who is Chinese, and who they met as he conducted research in Beijing.

"A defining exchange," Hartmann said.

The man grew up poor in a rural village, but had become an urban dweller.

"So what do you think about Tibet?" Hartmann asked the man.

"Well I'm Han," the man said of the majority group in China, which controls Tibet.

"That's all you think?" Hartmann asked him.

"Well, maybe if I was Tibetan, I would think differently," the man said.

Hartmann told me: "That is as progressive an answer as you can get ... Silence."

Hartmann went on: "History in China is non-existent. It's 5,000 years of a mystical past of greatness; 200 years of terrible humiliation that was undeserved, and now we're great again. There's no talk of socialism. Mao is completely a kitsch item. Mao, its like Andy Warhol stuff. It's a pop culture fetish."

The education system

How can that be, I asked?

"Two things," Hartmann replied. "One is the success — or failure — of the Chinese education system with respect to history and social studies. They have created ideology around the greatness of China and haven't taught basic history in any way that's meaningful. Another part of it goes back to the people who want China to be great again ... What I'm saying is it's not just the government. It's the people. This is deep in Chinese

culture, this nationalism."

So, as I head off to my seventh Summer Olympics, I asked him about the implications of this noticeable, grass-roots nationalism. Are the Olympics exactly what critics have long stated — merely a propaganda tool for China's leaders to soften their image in the world, despite China's policies in Tibet or its oil purchases in Sudan amid the Darfur crisis or violations of "human rights"?

Well, Hartmann said, it's not that simple.

First of all, Hartmann believes that the "human rights" debate is a bit off course. By Western standards, China isn't living up to human rights standards relative to, say, free speech, as was promised when the Games were awarded. But other rights are being tackled that seem more concrete, he said.

"The real activism that's happening in China that has possibilities is rights-based, but it's not human rights," he said. "Property rights" for rural land owners or urban condo dwellers and workers' rights seem to be more important to the people he met with.

Human rights activism is more abstract, he said. It focuses on the individual.

"I'm quite interested in how China thinks about that," he said. "Their point is that the focus on the individual misplaces the larger collective goods that we all need and share. That when you put the individual first, a lot of other things are going to get lost. And I think the more important critique on that is that the West talks about that all the time, but it's mainly in service of the rich elite ...

"Where I think the Chinese represent a real alternative on the world stage is economic development," he said. "Human rights might be important, but they don't necessarily mean a lot in Africa or Latin America where you have starving people. So, let's talk about economic development from the grass roots up for a large group of people. That's what I think the Chinese represent. And that's why I think China and their Olympic project is so popular outside the West. Human rights aside, China is talking about an alternative ideol-

ogy for social improvement."

That ideology isn't necessarily democratic. It's highly centralized. And, as in the Darfur controversy, it protects the notion of "national autonomy." That is, if China needs oil, it must be able to get it where it needs it, with no apologies.

He recalled his first visit in 2007 and a meeting with representatives of the Beijing Olympics Organizing Committee. Someone asked about China's support for the repressive Sudanese regime and its attacks on citizens in Darfur.

"They went ballistic," Hartmann said of the Beijing leaders. "How can this be coming out of the United States when the United States has created a war in Iraq to save their oil prices? That's what they asked us ... It's not so much they think they're in the right, they think they're doing what the West has been doing for the past 100 years."

A chant out of mourning

For Hartmann, the most poignant and troublesome example of the nationalism he felt came during one of the national days of mourning. Hartmann and his students were walking in central Beijing.

Near one of the city's few and most noted churches, an impromptu memorial broke out, with candles and songs and dancing.

"They were college-age people, maybe high school. It was very appropriate and you got a sense of the drama and tragedy of it all."

But amid this sadness, a chant began among the mourners and others watching them.

"Go, China, Go!"

Hartmann couldn't fathom it.

"It was so incongruous and inappropriate to my experiences and expectations," he said. "It was, with all the mourning, still important for them to say, 'We're great and we're going to beat everyone else.' The chant was the equivalent of us going down to New Orleans after Katrina and chanting, 'U-S-A! U-S-A! It's kind of scary. It's not just pride. It's a strong desire to be a leader, to be dominant.'"

He fears the possibilities come August as the world watches and visits.

THE DAILY GLEAN

It's back to the '70s – clever gas thieves, vinyl records

By DAVID BRAUER

Everyone goes big with UnitedHealth Group shedding 4,000 jobs on the same day it settled an options-backdating suit for nearly \$900 million. The Minnetonka-based company will eject 6 percent of its workers; the Strib's Chen May Yee says its unclear how many of Minnesota's 10,000 jobs will be cut. Former CEO Bill McGuire and top lawyer David Lubben are still on the hook in a separate suit.

More United Health: Yee notes that McGuire and other execs have "given back" options that roughly equal yesterday's payout; the PiPress' Julie Forster notes the total is "more than double" the combined payout of 11 other corporate backdating settlements. On the operating side, UnitedHealth margins were cut by rising medical costs, a failed cost-containment plan for chronically ill seniors and canceled pharmaceutical research projects. Go-go growth seems a thing of the past.

It was Energy Day in the U.S. Senate race. The PiPress' Rachel Stassen-Berger has Norm Coleman predicting that expanded offshore drilling will curb short-term speculation, even though new supplies would be a decade away. Al Franken opposes new leases and says oil companies should explore existing watery holes. He also favors shifting oil-industry tax breaks to alternative energy, the Strib's Kevin Duchscherer notes. Polls may favor Coleman's position. Both men support nukes and oppose Alaskan drilling.

The Strib's Jim Adams writes that more drive-off gas thieves are foiling security cams with stolen license plates. In Chaska

— Chaska! — cops advise folks to park in garages "or under bright lights" to avoid plate thieves. We got gas-cap locks in the '70s — can plate locks be far behind? Station owners will inevitably require more gas pre-payment.

Bowing to their lawyers' skepticism and perhaps political fears, the St. Paul City Council won't put instant-runoff voting on the ballot this fall, the PiPress's Jason Hoppin reports. Despite a successful petition drive, the council tabled the IRV initiative until a Minneapolis case is settled. The Strib's Chris Havens says IRV backers might sue, but would getting on the ballot be a pyrrhic victory given this year's public static? (Disclaimer: I pushed for IRV in Minneapolis.)

On the eve of the Fourth, MPR's Tom Robertson reports state park camping visits are down 10 percent so far this year. Officials blame the cool weather (indoor lodging around Itasca was up 70 percent in May) and high gas prices, but expect full facilities this weekend. Typically, 15 percent of state park visitors are from out of state, but that will probably drop.

Inevitable: Struggling restaurateur David Fhima filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy; his establishments once lorded over the 'burbs and St. Paul, with a grand downtown Minneapolis spot on the drawing board. He's now \$2 million in hock, the Strib's Steve Alexander reports. He owes Grant, Minn.'s David Wicker \$1 million. Only two restaurants, Zahtar and LoTo, remain in business.

An \$850 million, 400-megawatt wind farm is being proposed near the Iowa border, the

Winona Daily News's Amber Dulek writes. That's a pretty big output; for comparison, the Prairie Island nuke plant generates 1,100 megawatts. The Fillmore County plan would feature 266 turbines on 466 acres. Construction could start in 2009 if locals sign off.

Embarrassing: Turns out historic rings and crosses believed stolen from Archbishop John Nienstedt's St. Paul home were in a cardboard box in a bedroom closet. At MPR's News Cut, Bob Collins mocks a church staffer's statement that he found the stuff after a "final" sweep. Apparently the Columbo-like cleric wondered how thieves could carry a 75-pound safe and jewelry box down from the roof. The safe and Nienstedt's personal jewelry are still gone.

KSTP's Glen Barbour says Minneapolis cops are cracking down on bicycle parking — including several spots you might think are fine: parking meters, streetlights and the less reasonable trees and handicapped signs. Technically, you can only park in designated racks and some street signs. Some rack owners have complained about abandoned bikes, so police post warning tags and later take those two-wheelers away, too.

MPR's Tom Scheck notes that New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg will come to the Twin Cities July 25. The multibillionaire ex-Democrat, ex-Republican and current vice-presidential possibility will raise money for Minnesota's Independence Party.

Holy crap: Best Buy will start selling vinyl records at an undisclosed number of test stores, the Strib's Jackie Crosby writes. Vinyl sounds "warm," and covers look "fun," one

aficionado gushes. Rap and hip-hop deserve a lot of the credit. The local indies who kept the format alive say they'll survive the mainstream onslaught. Electric Fetus has tripled its vinyl section in 18 months.

Cities 97 DJ Brian Turner and event promoter Kevin Campbell bought Taste of Minnesota, the PiPress's Dave Orrick notes. They'll take over for next year's festival. No sale price leaks.

Attention, Michele Bachmann! Fox9's Christine Clayburg reports that a new light bulb using less than half a fluorescent's energy is now available in the Twin Cities. Good news: The LED bulb allegedly lasts 43 years, has no mercury, and is indestructible. Bad news: It costs 50 bucks and the light looks spotlight-y. One bummer: I couldn't figure out from the report exactly where in town to find these things.

Bzzt! A Maple Grove bike bridge had to be closed after it shocked bikers, KARE's Dana Thiede reports. Turns out the bridge wasn't grounded properly, officials say. Why does a bridge have to be grounded? Nearby power lines are really big and really close. So grounding means the substantial electric field will still be emitted; you just won't feel it as much? Doesn't sound healthy.

Nort spews: How 'bout those Twins rookie starters? Nick Blackburn dominates as Minnesota beats Detroit 7-0; it's the Tigers' first series loss in nearly a month.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Happy Birthday, America! – and many more!

By PHYLLIS STENERSON

Are we the ones who will witness democracy's demise? I don't think this is what poet June Jordan had in mind when she wrote, "We are the ones we've been waiting for."

It could happen.

When a small segment of the population has a disproportionate amount of the wealth, it's called a plutocracy. When a small group controls money, government and the military, that's fascism. When one religion dominates, it's theocracy. When leaders lie to the people, start a war, flaunt national and international laws, trash the environment and amass a monstrous debt, that's just plain terrifying. Many fear the democracy of we the people is dangerously close to crumbling, overtaken by one of the other systems of government.

But it won't.

First hundreds, then thou-

sands and now millions of patriotic Americans have boldly asserted that they are the ones we've been waiting for and have chosen to devote their time and talents to assure that government of, by and for the people will not perish from this land.

A movement from the grass roots

A massive, vibrant progressive movement has emerged to restore and strengthen democracy. It's grown up from the grass roots, not handed down from national leadership. People are connecting to one another through conferences and workshops, in meetings at coffee shops, community centers, churches, mosques and synagogues and through the Internet in amazingly creative ways.

They are educating themselves and others about critical issues and envisioning a better future for all. Books and articles are being written by experts and

activists. Bloggers are having dialogues that raise and examine important issues. Citizen journalists are reporting on news that the corporate media ignores.

They've formed hundreds of organizations and are implementing thousands of projects to get ordinary citizens involved. They are exploring the spiritual progressive values on which our country was founded.

Dissent is essential

They are protesting when the current administration and Congress propose or enact policies that aggravate problems instead of leading to solutions. Dissent is an essential part of democracy. They support those officeholders who are standing up for our rights.

And they are working to get progressive candidates elected to office at every level of government, from city councils to Congress and the presidency. Then they will hold these elected

officials accountable.

Now is the time for all citizens to actively participate in democracy to best of their ability. To volunteer instead of shopping. To talk to people with differing viewpoints, rather than just those who agree. To contribute money instead of buying a new handbag or golf club. To make phone calls instead of watching a reality show on TV.

This is real: citizens taking responsibility for the future of their country.

This is democracy in action!

Phyllis Stenerson, of Minneapolis, focuses on values in politics and public policy through research, writing and activism at ProgressiveValues.org.

A massive, vibrant progressive movement has emerged to restore and strengthen democracy. It's grown up from the grass roots, not handed down from national leadership. People are connecting to one another through conferences and workshops, in meetings at coffee shops, community centers, churches, mosques and synagogues and through the Internet in amazingly creative ways.

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