

# Remember, summer goes by quickly

I don’t know about you, but I’m not sure how the calendar has so suddenly turned to the month of July. But if the swiftness of 2012’s first six months is any indicator, summer’s going to be gone quicker than a jump in the lake – which means there’s no time like now to start getting out and about to take advantage of some of our enjoyable and unique summer offerings.

Throughout the past weekend, I had the opportunity to do just that by: joining the community of Hammondsport for a village-wide celebration of Hammondsport’s designation as Budget Travel magazine’s “America’s Coolest Small Town 2012.” What a great occasion to



help welcome another season of summer tourism in the Finger Lakes. It took a fantastic, region-wide show of support to help Hammondsport rise to the top, and it’s a real tribute to one of our great Finger Lakes towns. And we shouldn’t overlook the fact that it helps to remind the nation that the Finger Lakes region is alive and well, and still making unique and valuable contributions to America’s culture and economy.

I also helped celebrate the 50th Anniversary of one our legendary Finger Lakes wineries, Dr. Konstantin Frank Vinifera Wine Cellars on Keuka Lake.

Assemblyman Phil Palmesano and I helped commemorate Dr. Frank’s half century as New York’s most award-winning winery with a joint Legislative Resolution that reads, in part, “Dr. Frank’s vision, knowledge and determination are credited with elevating the Finger Lakes wine industry to a level which commands world attention.”

Of course, the Finger Lakes wine industry and its vineyards and wineries have for so long been the hub of a statewide grape and wine industry that, especially over the past two decades, has emerged as one of New York’s great success stories (which you can read all about on [www.fingerlakeswinecountry.com](http://www.fingerlakeswinecountry.com) or [www.uncorknewyork.com](http://www.uncorknewyork.com)).

What else? Over at Watkins Glen International, there was a Military & Veterans Appreciation Event in conjunction with the Sahlen’s Six Hours of the Glen to kick off another summer of exciting racing at The Glen ([www.theglen.com](http://www.theglen.com)).

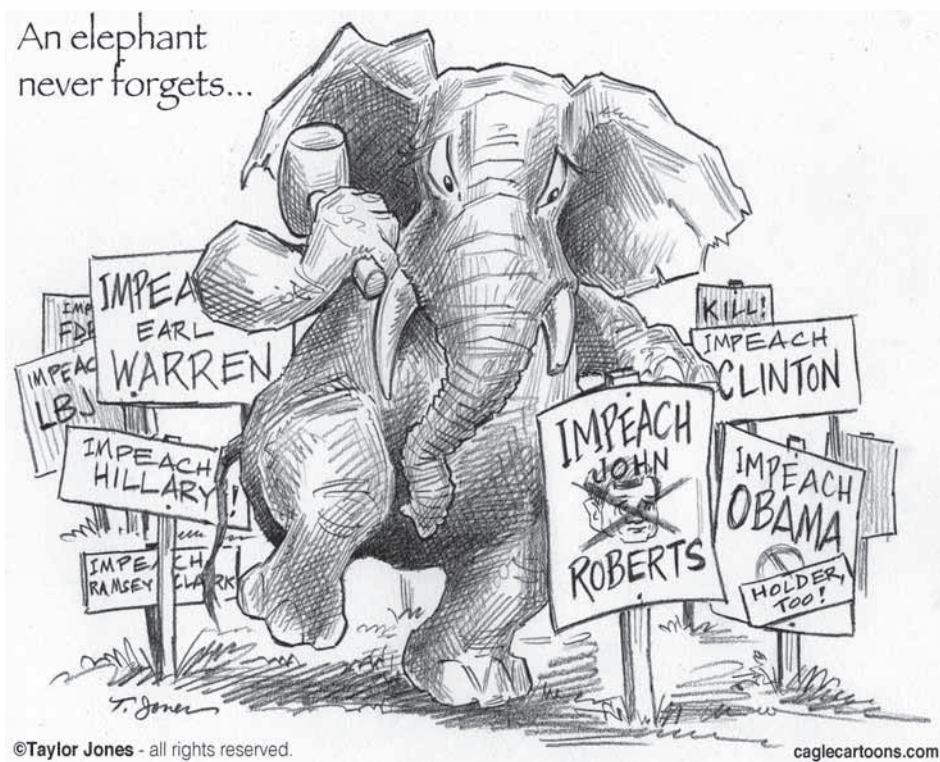
There was news of a quieter opening of the Upstate Brewing Company, Elmira’s first craft brewery in about 80 years according to the owners, which promises to be a great addition to the Finger Lakes Beer Trail ([www.fingerlakesbeertrail.com](http://www.fingerlakesbeertrail.com)) and New York’s overall efforts to keep growing a vibrant craft brewing industry. This industry will strengthen local agriculture and tourism, and already consists of more than 90 breweries, accounts for thousands of jobs and generates more than \$200 million of annual economic activity.

How about farmer’s markets? Late last week, Governor Andrew Cuomo helped jump-start the summer season across New York by noting the beginning of farmers’ market season. The number of farmers’ markets in New York State has more than doubled over the past decade so that, this summer, we can boast of more than 560 farmers’ markets statewide. They benefit the residents of our cities, suburbs and rural villages and towns by offering access to fresh food and, at the same time, helping New York’s farmers sell directly to consumers. It’s a win-win offering. To say nothing of the fact that a visit to a farmers’ market is one great way to recall the cultural and economic importance of agriculture and farming not just across our region, but as a defining feature of New York State. Agriculture remains New York’s No. 1 industry, after all. Today’s farm economy generates more than \$4 billion worth of annual economic activity statewide and provides a livelihood for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. The state Department of Ag and Markets offers a convenient, online interactive map to help locate one near you :<http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/CommunityFarmersMarkets.asp>. And you can also find a listing on [www.ilovethefingerlakes.com/basics/agriculture-farmersmarkets.htm](http://www.ilovethefingerlakes.com/basics/agriculture-farmersmarkets.htm).

In other words, we’re a great summer place to be and we should take all of the well-earned pride that that deserves across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions – where we’re fortunate to be able to offer some of the most popular and iconic cultural, recreational and scenic attractions anywhere in the world. One great place to read all about it, of course, is on the state’s I LOVE NY website: [www.iloveny.com](http://www.iloveny.com). And visit my Senate website, [omara.nysenate.gov](http://omara.nysenate.gov), for even more tourism-related links and information.

■ Tom O’Mara is a Republican state senator from Big Flats.

## ARTIST’S VIEW



## COMMENTARY | ABEER MOHAMMED

# Rekindling sectarian violence

Iraqi politicians from across the ethnic and religious spectrum agree that the recent wave of attacks targeting Shia Iraqis appears to be a deliberate move by extremists to reignite the sectarian conflict of past years.

The Islamic State of Iraq, a Sunni militant group affiliated to al-Qaida, has claimed responsibility for most of the bombings that have left more than 150 people dead since the beginning of June.

The carnage began on June 4, with 24 dead and more than 120 injured when a suicide bomber detonated his vehicle at the Baghdad headquarters of the Shia Endowment, a group that manages religious sites across Iraq.

On June 13, about 75 people were killed and more than 200 wounded in a string of attacks across the country. Once again, most of the casualties were Shia Muslims.

The Islamic State of Iraq posted a statement describing this attack as “blessed Wednesday’s battle,” a “response to the crimes of the Shia government,” and a blow “in support of Sunni prisoners.”

Two car bombings in Baghdad on June 16 left 32 dead and at least 60 injured. This time, the vic-

tims were pilgrims marking the anniversary of the death of Musa al-Kadhim, the seventh of the Twelve Imams of Shia Islam.

Then, two days later, a suicide bomber detonated his charges among the crowd at a Shia funeral in Baquba in central Iraq, killing 25 people and injuring 40.

Iraq’s mainstream political groupings – Shia, Sunni and Kurdish – agree about the objective of the bombings.

Maysun al-Damaloji, a spokesman for the Sunni-backed Iraqiya bloc, described the attacks as “designed to sow ‘fitnah’ (discord) among Iraqis, especially since it coincided with the Imam Musa al-Kadhim pilgrimage.”

A spokesman for the Kurdish Alliance, Moayyad al-Tayyib, agreed, saying, “We strongly condemn the bombings that targeted innocent civilians. We hold the security authorities partly responsible.”

Ali Shubbar, a Shia member of parliament, agreed that the bombings were intended as an incitement to sectarian conflict. “The terrorists are trying to play a vicious game by using sectarianism as an instrument to achieve their plans, and by sowing hatred among Iraqis.”

Osama Murtadha, a Baghdad-based analyst,

believes the unresolved disputes among the country’s leading politicians have fostered an environment that makes sectarian violence possible.

“In an atmosphere in which Shia and Sunni politicians fight each other, sectarian conflict looks very likely,” he said.

Shia, Sunni and Kurdish parties have been locked in dispute since December 2011 when the last American troops left Iraq. Power-sharing arrangements wore thin after Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki issued an arrest warrant against Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, the most senior Sunni Arab politician in the country, on terrorism charges.

As the dispute continues, Kurds have joined forces with Maliki’s political rivals to accuse him of autocratic methods. The prime minister could yet face a vote of no confidence in parliament.

“This country’s leaders need to become aware of what’s going on in their homeland before time runs out.”

■ Murtadha Abeer Mohammed is the Iraq editor for The Institute for War & Peace Reporting, a nonprofit organization that trains journalists in areas of conflict.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### A history of VOODOO

TO THE EDITOR | There recently appeared in the newspaper a cartoon by someone whom I believe to be a local person. This cartoon appears daily entitled “Close to Home.” The caption beneath the illustration was “There goes the neighborhood.” A garment worn by one of the characters bore the word VOODOO, a term which evokes impressions of a not-so-socially-popular cultist subculture at best and a downright despicable school of thought at worst. Having recently worn my new VOODOO T-shirts in public while shopping I suspect they have been seen, and perhaps disrespected, by the cartoonist whose cartoon I enjoy daily.

That said, let me tell you about this VOODOO and why I wear these shirts in public with pride. As a U.S. airman stationed in France from

1957 to 1961, I was an aircraft mechanic working on several types of planes. The last one to which I was assigned was the McDonald RF 101-C VOODOO; a very fast and powerful bird; holder of three world speed records across America and back in one multi-plane exercise. In another exercise the VOODOO demonstrated a speed of 1276 mph over a measured 10-mile range. During the Cuban Missile Crisis I saw the shadow of a VOODOO as it photographed the missiles deployed there. She was a magnificent bird to see in flight wearing two tail feathers of flame as she lifted her nose steeply up and climbed into the predawn sky. We were tasked with photo recon, and carried no weapons. Pilots were told that if approached by enemy aircraft to light the burners and run. They can’t catch you.

My job was to analyze and record items which

needed attention while in for periodic maintenance. When they came out of the maintenance dock I had to prepare them for test flights, fully service them with fuel, hydraulic fluid, oxygen and any other need. When she was ready for test I called for a test pilot. When he arrived I followed him through the walk-around answering any questions, strapped him in, applied external power for start up, pulled the chocks and signaled him out. This occurred on a four-day rotation and I loved it. The pilots were usually one of these: Captain David Neally, Captain David Freil, Major Reichert and one other, Major Frank Borman, nine years before he commanded the first manned trip to the moon.

I bear the cartoonist no grudge for the art and caption. In fact, thank you.

A. Carl Bliss  
Troupsburg

## OTHER VIEW | DALLAS MORNING NEWS

# Focus on farm aid

Ever since the 1930s, the degree of federal meddling in the farm economy has run contrary to the notion of an open marketplace. The most egregious example of late has been Washington paying farmers a subsidy to grow such commodity crops as corn, soybeans, sorghum and wheat.

Direct subsidies began as a way to sustain farmers who were struggling in emerging international markets back in the 1990s. The payments indeed helped some producers. They also distorted the marketplace, giving farmers an incentive to plant a surplus of commodity crops. For example, the subsidies contributed to high levels of corn production, which increased pressure on limited water resources in places like the Texas Panhandle.

What’s more, the direct payments ended up in the pockets of agribusinesses that were quite capable of surviving without Uncle Sam’s help, thank you very much.

The Morning News, along with many organizations, opposed the subsidies back in the fierce debate over the 2008 renewal of the farm bill, a fight in which supporters of the direct payments eventually prevailed.

An encouraging reversal occurred last week in the Senate’s revision of the farm bill, which Congress must update every few years. By a 64-35 vote, a bipartisan coalition ended direct payments for commodity crops. Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison was among those backing the legislation, while Texas Sen. John Cornyn unfortunately was not.

The shift was a breakthrough in the world of farm policy, which affects the many Texans who grow crops and raise livestock. Some observers hailed the move as one of the most important farm changes in decades.

At the same time that senators ended the subsidies, they put a new emphasis on helping farmers get crop insurance. This is a logical move since farmers endure serious risks from wild weather, diseased crops and global politics. Insurance can help offset those risks, which last summer’s drought across our state certainly highlighted.

Yes, Washington would pay a portion of crop insurance for numerous farmers: The government would help those with annual incomes up to \$750,000 with some of their premiums. We don’t like that the threshold has been set so high and hope the House will limit the number of farmers who qualify for aid when it drafts its farm bill next month. At the least, the House should curtail the amount of aid farmers would get under the Senate proposal. The goal should be to help those farmers most at risk, not those who can help themselves.

Overall, this new direction in farm policy should gain favor from the Republican House because insuring against risk makes more sense than directly paying farmers to produce a crop. It certainly fits more neatly with the idea of a marketplace.