

OPINION

LETTERS POLICY

■ Letters should be typed or neatly printed.
■ Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number.

■ Letters may be edited for space considerations.
■ The publication of any letter is at the discretion of the editor.

■ All letters become the property of The Leader and cannot be returned to sender.

Mail: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, THE LEADER
PO BOX 1017
CORNING, NY 14830
Fax: 607-936-9939
Email: sdupree@the-leader.com

Online at www.the-leader.com/opinions

JAMES POST | ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dateline NBC fails to capture complexity of Clayton case

On Friday, Dateline NBC aired an hour broadcast on the murder of Kelley Clayton, titled “The House in the Woods.” Many of you may have watched it, as I did, wondering how the show would present the case that many of us have been following for a year and a half to a national audience.

Sadly, I found myself disappointed with a simplified story based on a very complex case.

To begin with — and this is a minor point — locals know that Caton isn’t actually an isolated island of homes in the middle of a trackless jungle, even though it might appear that way to big-city producers.

Unfortunately, portraying the Clayton home as being hours from civilization wasn’t the show’s biggest flaw. To be fair, a one-hour television show can’t cover everything that has happened since Sept. 29, 2015.

Dateline focused heavily on Linda Miller’s realization that the call Tom made from her phone the night of the killing could be significant.

Her clarity of thought in a traumatic situation and her speed in sharing that information with law enforcement are worthy of praise. But that’s not where the story ended. In between that discovery — along with New York State Police Inv. Matthew Lambert getting a confession from Michael Beard — and Thomas Clayton’s trial in January, there were months of the kind of detail work by dozens of hard-working investigators, crime scene analysts, lab scientists and computer crime experts that just don’t make for good television.

There was no smoking

gun that connected Thomas Clayton to Michael Beard — no transfer of money for the killing, no specific text message where Clayton told Beard, “Kill my wife.”

What prosecutor Weeden Wetmore did have was a lot of suspicious communication and movement captured by cell phones, surveillance cameras and GPS. It was up to Wetmore, with the help of NYSP Inv. Allison Regan, to make sense of all those data points for a jury. To do so, they hung much of their case on a presentation by Sy Ray of the Zetx company, who tied together all that data into a map presentation showing the movements of Beard and Clayton. It was a risky move, giving defense attorney Ray Schlather the opportunity to call into question the accuracy of all the tracking techniques as well as Sy Ray’s methods of correlating them.

Schlather worked hard to tear all that work apart, giving the kind of vigorous defense any of us would want if accused of a crime.

In other words, Thomas Clayton’s conviction was never a slam-dunk; it was a hard-fought victory, and much of what brought it to fruition didn’t make it to air Friday night.

Dateline can easily be forgiven for leaving out the involvement of hapless — and clueless — “lookout” Marcus Blandford.

They might even be forgiven for leaving out the very important detail that Clayton was Beard’s landlord, and that he was desperate for money because Clayton was evicting him.

But a nod in the direction of those who did the hard

work of putting together a case that took six weeks to present would probably have been appreciated, by people such as:

- Inv. David Kuntz, Inv. Daniel Armstrong, Inv. Michael Lostracco, Inv. Jason Fifield and Sr. Inv. Kevin Sucher of the New York State Police Forensic Identification Unit
- K-9 Trooper Thomas McDonnell, who with partner Mic searched the scene the night of the killing, and K-9 Trooper Michael Kien, who along with partner Dodge located the murder weapon
- Captain Eric Tyner of the Steuben County Sheriff’s Office, who led the investigation
- New York State Police Sr. Inv. Rick Kemp, who coordinated the case from the state police side
- Chemung County Assistant District Attorney Susan Rider-Ulacco, who during both trials was always there with whatever Wetmore needed, often when he didn’t realize he needed it - along with doing a lot of legal stuff I’m not smart enough to understand
- Wetmore’s investigators Michael Marrone and Richard Weed, who were often expected to jump on their phones during the trial and investigate claims being made by the defense
- Steuben County Judge Peter Bradstreet, who maintained an orderly proceeding and largely kept Wetmore and Schlather from going for each other’s throats, and did it all with good humor
- And while she’s already been mentioned above, Inv. Regan, who after spending months investigating the case, then spent hours under cross-examination being grilled about her qualifications in her area of expertise, and never lost her poise.
- And of course, many others I’m forgetting to mention, or will never know about.

- James Post has been assistant editor of The Leader for almost three weeks now. He can be reached at jpost@the-leader.com.

COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

This is a long walk for New York’s economy



TOM O'MARA

Spring has sprung, officially at least, and it shouldn’t be long before we’re enjoying warmer days and milder nights.

In fact, according to groups like the Washington, D.C.-based Outdoor Foundation (<https://www.outdoorfoundation.org>), more and more of us are more than ready to get outside for a little fishing, a bike ride or a long walk on the trail. Outdoor recreation appears to be an ever-growing trend around the nation — a very positive one at that, I would add.

The nation’s participation in outdoor recreation remains at a high point. Based upon the findings of the Foundation’s 10th annual “Outdoor Recreation Participation Report,” approximately half of all Americans participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2016. That means that over 142 million citizens went on a collective 11.7 billion outdoor outings.

That is an extremely telling statistic for many reasons, including that it’s outstanding for the economy. The Foundation notes that nearly 143 million citizens participated in nearly 12 billion outdoor outings in 2015. According to the Outdoor Industry Association (<https://outdoorindustry.org>), outdoor recreation is “an economic powerhouse” in the United States, accounting for \$646 billion in economic activity and directly supporting 6.1 million jobs. In New York alone, the industry generates \$33.8 billion in consumer spending, directly supports 304,600 jobs, and is responsible for \$12.4 billion in wages and salaries and nearly \$3 billion in revenue.

It’s big business in and of itself, without question, but it’s equally important in many other ways.

Here at home, for example, we know that “getting

outdoors” is critical for our leading tourism industry.

The regional grape and wine industry, for example, goes on attracting visitors by the millions. The state Wine and Grape Foundation has pegged the economic impact of grapes, grape juice and wine in New York State at \$4.8 billion. The Finger Lakes region is recognized as one of the Top 10 “must-visit stops” on a wine tour of the world.

We also know that past U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service surveys have revealed the huge economic impact of the nearly 90 million Americans who fish, hunt or engage in other wildlife-related recreation. It’s an equally significant impact in New York State where hunting, fishing and trapping are deeply rooted as part of our region’s culture, experience and tradition. According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, New York’s more than one million sportsmen and sportswomen generate nearly \$2 billion worth of statewide economic activity and directly create 28,000 jobs.

And we certainly can’t overlook the importance of our regional parks and trails in getting people outdoors. New York can boast of one of America’s outstanding systems of state parks, including a network of historic sites, parks and trails throughout the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions that are second to none, including the nationally renowned Watkins Glen State Park.

Every year, we have a great opportunity to help celebrate (and improve at

the same time) this amazing network of outdoor recreational opportunities thanks to Parks and Trails New York’s (PTNY) “I Love My Park Day,” which is scheduled this year for Saturday, May 6th. This incredibly successful PTNY event aims to encourage volunteer efforts to enhance New York’s parks and historic sites and promote the entire park system. Events will take place statewide and regionally, including at Stony Brook State Park, Seneca Lake State Park, the Ithaca Dog Park near Treman Marina and the Robert H. Treman State Park. Last year, more than 7,500 volunteers took part in more than 200 cleanup, improvement and beautification projects at 110 state parks and historic sites statewide.

Additional “I Love My Park Day” information, including an online registration process now underway, is available on the PTNY website, <https://www.ptny.org>.

It’s an outstanding and highly productive initiative supporting one of the state’s most worthwhile commitments. We know it’s a wise investment. A past PTNY study has pegged the economic impact of New York’s 178 state parks, 35 historic sites, 1,350 miles of hiking trails and over 8,000 campsites (not to mention boat launches, beaches, swimming pools and nature centers) at nearly \$2 billion in revenue, almost \$500 million in employment income and 20,000 jobs. Reports from the state Office of Parks and Recreation continue to show impressive annual attendance at state parks and historic sites.

The bottom line is this: the trend toward getting outdoors clearly promises to set some strong, favorable economic winds blowing in the direction of the long-term rebuilding of New York State’s economy.

GOLDEN GLOW VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY
PRESENTS
“PENNY SINGS PATSY”
Patsy Cline Impersonator
SATURDAY
APRIL 1st 7 pm – 9 pm

Tickets available
Mondays 4pm - 6pm and Thursdays 6 pm – 8 pm
Golden Glow Firehouse
214 Hendy Creek Rd, Pine City
Or by email: cc1068@me.com
\$10 in advance • \$15 at door

The Leader Staff

<p>The Leader (ISSN #10501983) The Leader is published daily at 34 West Pulteney Street, Corning, New York 14830 by Gatehouse Media, LLC. Periodical postage paid at Corning, N.Y. 14830-0817.USPS code 0586-160 Postmaster: Send address changes to The Leader, 34 West Pulteney Street, Corning, New York 14830</p>	<p>Business Office Becky Post Administration 936-4651, Ext. 306 bpост@the-leader.com</p> <p>Classifieds 936-4651, Ext 651 Retail 936-4651, Ext 653</p> <p>Postal rates</p> <table><tr><td>Steuben County</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>One month</td><td>\$39.12</td></tr><tr><td>Three months</td><td>\$117.36</td></tr><tr><td>Six months</td><td>\$234.72</td></tr><tr><td>One year</td><td>\$469.44</td></tr><tr><td>ELSEWHERE IN USA</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>One month</td><td>\$49.47</td></tr><tr><td>Three months</td><td>\$148.41</td></tr><tr><td>Six months</td><td>\$296.82</td></tr><tr><td>One year</td><td>\$593.64</td></tr></table> <p>Home delivery subscriptions reflect basic subscription rates before additional charges. Due to the added value of special editions there will be an additional charge for each special edition which will accelerate the expiration of your subscription. There will be no more than 12 special editions per year.</p>	Steuben County		One month	\$39.12	Three months	\$117.36	Six months	\$234.72	One year	\$469.44	ELSEWHERE IN USA		One month	\$49.47	Three months	\$148.41	Six months	\$296.82	One year	\$593.64
Steuben County																					
One month	\$39.12																				
Three months	\$117.36																				
Six months	\$234.72																				
One year	\$469.44																				
ELSEWHERE IN USA																					
One month	\$49.47																				
Three months	\$148.41																				
Six months	\$296.82																				
One year	\$593.64																				
<p>Publisher Rick Emanuel Group Publisher 936-4651, Ext. 303</p>																					
<p>Editorial Shawn Vargo Executive Editor 936-4651, Ext. 361 svargo@the-leader.com</p>																					
<p>Circulation Corinne Mulligan Customer Service/ Sales Manager 936-4651, Ext. 328</p>																					
<p>Advertising Heather Falkey Ad Director 936-4651, Ext. 347 hfalkey@the-leader.com</p>																					

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thank you to Rambler’s Rest

To the Editor,

With Rambler’s Rest closing on Saturday, I have read with interest all of the comments regarding their contributions to the area during their 65 years in business.

Several years ago, in 1993, our daughter Kristina, who was born with brain damage, stopped eating. The only thing she would eat was the tuna salad from Rambler’s

Rest. She spent several weeks in Strong Memorial Hospital under the care of Dr. Richard Kreipe, Behavior Modification Specialist. Still, the only thing she would eat was the tuna salad from Rambler’s Rest.

At that point her weight was 68 pounds and she was in danger of losing her life. Every day, Mike would make a container of tuna salad and I would take it up to Strong. Slowly but surely Kristina started to gain weight and was finally able to come home.

Kristina was one of the Miracle Children of the year at Strong that year and appeared on the Children’s Miracle Network.

To this day, when we see Dr. Kreipe he always asks us about Rambler’s Roost. I will always be grateful to Mike and Sue for their part in saving Kristina’s life. I truly wish them a retirement filled with good health, happiness and prosperity. They truly deserve it in more ways than one.

Denece Gossie
Ithaca

Kudos Wheeler Highway Dept.

To the editor,

Kudo’s to the Town of Wheeler Highway Department.

During the harshest wind and snow of ‘Storm Stella’, Alan and his crew made it a priority to keep the roads clear, both paved and dirt roads.

I called Alan and asked for the best route to get to work at the hospital. He not only gave me a good route, but had a snowplow plow the roads to go through the route, making a safe trip for me.

Often it’s a thankless job with long hours. It’s a job most of us couldn’t and wouldn’t be able to do.

I would like to take this opportunity to let them know how much their dedication and selfless nature is appreciated.

Thank you for all you do in keeping us safe.

Connie Kearns
Avoca

- Bring History Alive -
Blacksmith Classes at the Heritage Village
in the 1870 Cooley Blacksmith Shop
73 W. Pulteney Street, Corning, NY

Learn how to forge iron into useful shapes to make a gift for that special person or for yourself.
All tools and class materials are provided.

Class Times are 9:00 am – 4:00 pm (weekdays or weekends available)
(only one student per class provides individual instruction)
Call 937-5281 for further information or to register

Basic Fundamentals: 14-hour introduction; make tent stakes, S – hooks, camp fire tools, wall hooks, garden plant hooks

Intermediate Fundamentals: Prerequisite: Basic fundamentals. 14-hour course; make leaf designs/key rings, utensils, plate stands, wall shelf brackets, paper weights, and table trivets weights, trivet