

JAMES AUER

Critic, friend was a rare human being

Many thanks to both the reporters and editors who provided such welcome reading about James Auer ("Critic, historian and friend, Auer made journalism an art," Dec. 19). As has been reiterated, he was a rare human being — and it's sometimes rarer still that correct journalistic appreciation is afforded someone of his caliber.

Back in 1974, I was in the middle of a seven-summer stint as publicist for the Melody Top Theatre out on Good Hope Road. Jim was assigned by the Journal to profile the opening star of the season, Penny Singleton — "Blondie" of film fame, the voice of TV's "Jane Jetson" and the headliner of the revival of "No, No, Nanette" at the tent. It was the first of many joint journalistic encounters I enjoyed with Jim and, after he delighted Penny for an hour or so, he and I must have spent twice as much time standing in the Holiday Inn parking lot, talking about the wide variety of entertainments he loved — the enthusiasm for which he never failed to selflessly share.

That last is perhaps the key word to describe the Jim Auer so many were privileged to know and cherish. He not only possessed the talent and intelligence and heart and humor; he imparted them with a cavalier disregard for self-importance or self-maintenance. Those who knew him, personally and/or professionally, never stopped reaping the benefits of the man — at his quiet and joyous insistence.

To paraphrase Judy Garland's description of Mickey Rooney in "Andy Hardy Meets Debutante" (1940) — a movie reference Jim would (I feel certain!) recognize — Jim Auer was indeed "one of nature's noblemen." God bless him; his is an irreplaceable and unique soul.

John Fricke

New York, N.Y.

Critic's perspectives will be missed

As a visitor to Milwaukee, my hometown, to see relatives and friends over the years, I often appreciated reading pieces by the late James Auer, Journal Sentinel art critic ("Critic, historian and friend, Auer made journalism an art," Dec. 19). I met him in passing, introduced by my longtime friends, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee professor emeritus and artist Leon Travanti and artist Carolyn White Travanti. His perspectives will be missed.

Patrick Redmond

St. Paul, Minn.

RUMSFELD

Question prompted "dreadful" sight

Sgt. John Raws wrote home:

"The glories of (combat) are great, but the horrors are greater. With all I'd heard ... and imagined ... I yet never conceived that war could be so dreadful. ... When I came on the scene, the whole place was spread with dead."

Raws was later killed in action, on Aug. 12, 1916, at the First Battle of the Somme. That was a World War I

battle organized and promoted by Lt. Gen. Douglas Haig, commanding officer of the British forces.

Before this battle, Haig had been quoted as saying: "The machine gun has not been produced that can stop a good horse." At the First Battle of the Somme, the British lost 450,000 killed and wounded in five months.

This month, the United States witnessed an "emperor's clothes" moment when an enlisted man from the Tennessee National Guards asked Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld — and President Bush and his fellow Americans — why soldiers are being sent into bloody combat with defective equipment.

That moment will be long remembered whatever the source of the question. Instantly, Rumsfeld — his arrogance and his ignorance — was naked to the world. It was a "dreadful" sight.

Robert Harrington

Appleton

GIVING

Banning kettles, poppies shows little heart

They are all heart, or so they say.

Some stores are banning Salvation Army kettles. What is next? Many veterans organizations have felt the ban when selling — no, not selling, giving poppies in return for a donation.

I guess corporate America feels standing outside a building in all kinds of weather takes money out of its registers. The companies may make contributions to charitable organizations, but that is a tax deduction, while people giving to those standing either with a kettle or with a bag or basket of poppies give from the heart. Many say to veterans, "Thank you for what you did," not wanting a flower.

Its good will that makes cash registers ring, not memos banning certain events held once a year.

Sebastian H. Corriere

Commander, VFW Post No. 2804

Milwaukee

AURORA

Area big enough for two hospitals

I disagree with your editorial dealing with a new hospital in the Town of Summit ("Aurora unconvincing, Dec. 6). I feel the Town Board made the right decision as elected officials of the Town of Summit.

We are part of an expanding area, and I believe there is room for two hospitals. I don't believe that there was a vote or opposition in Milwaukee when St. Francis and St. Luke hospitals were built. I would guess that they are a mile or so from each other.

I have worked in the EMS system for many years and know the importance of a good emergency room setup and how it will benefit our community. No, I have never been associated with Aurora or Pro Health Care.

Paul Laszkiewicz

Town of Summit

MISSILE DEFENSE

It isn't a bad idea to protect our cities

This is in regard to the Dec. 19 editorial "Star Wars still a bad idea." A bad idea to protect our cities against nuclear missile attacks that could kill thousands? Who wrote this insanity?

The editorial said "terrorists can use car bombs"— how can you compare this with nuclear missile attacks? "Kim Jong Il is not suicidal"— yes, but some Arabs by their very religion are! "These dollars can be used for better causes" — than what? Preventing our population from being destroyed?

This anti-missile protection must be developed. It is absolutely essential.

The Journal Sentinel's editorial policy is simply standing in the way.

Rich Leikam

West Allis

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