

[SECTION G]

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SUNDAY EDITORIAL G-6

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# Opinion

"Publish and set up a standard; publish and conceal not." Jeremiah 50:2

Two wars:  
Which one  
should be more  
important?

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Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

## Recalling better times


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Editorial writer

### Is there a people's revolt in the making?

Here and there across Tulsa, in offices and restaurants, street corners and back yards, there's talk of recalling. And it's not about a stroll down memory lane.

Could recall be in the future of one or more city councilors?

Maybe, maybe not. But it is a possibility — for one reason because it's not that hard to do.

Article VII of the Tulsa City Charter lays out the process. A preliminary petition for recall is the first step.

This petition must have the signatures of qualified electors equal to 5 percent of those voting in the last general election if the target is an official elected at large in the city, or 10 percent of the appropriate district's voter turnout in the last election if the target is a councilor.

This step is easy enough to achieve, since turnout in city elections is usually fewer than 3,000 votes per district.

This petition, filed with the city clerk, must include a short statement on why recall is sought — any reason apparently will suffice — and the targeted official then has five days to file an answer.

The idea behind this step is to give the official a chance to respond to charges or claims. The answer will be included on a supporting petition, which is the next step.

Within 15 days after the answer deadline has passed, the city clerk prepares a supporting petition, which recounts the initial steps and officially raises the recall question.

Copies of this petition will then be circulated for signatures. Circulators must obtain signatures equal to 25 percent of the votes cast in the last general election — throughout the whole city for an at-large official, or just in the affected district for a councilor.



Members of the Tulsa City Council are (standing, from left) Sam Roop, Jack Henderson, Bill Christiansen, Chris Medlock, Roscoe Turner, Jim Mautino, (seated, from left) Susan Neal, Randy Sullivan and Tom Baker.

cilor.

Petitioners have 60 days after the city clerk issues the supporting petition form to gather the signatures, which must match names on voter registration rolls. Street addresses also are required.

Ultimately, the city clerk and council decide if the petitions comply with requirements. If they do, then a recall election is set "at the earliest time allowed" under state laws.

The ballot will ask: "Shall (name of person) be recalled from the office of (name of office)?" Voters can mark either "For" or "Against."

All city voters can vote on recalling an at-large officer, but only district residents can vote to recall their councilor.

If the majority votes for recall, the official is officially out once the vote is certified.

What next? The office is declared vacant, and under Article VI, a whole new process starts.

A special election is called if a councilor is recalled more than a year before the next general election, and the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes wins.

If a councilor is removed less than a year prior to the next general election, the council by majority vote appoints someone to fill the unexpired term.

Can the recalled official run again, or stand as a candidate for appointment? The charter does not prohibit either possibility.

Since this council took office in April, there has been one troubling development after another. What hasn't made the headlines is what some people are saying privately.

Unfortunately, a four-member minor-

ity of sensible, reasonable and thoughtful councilors — Bill Christiansen, Randy Sullivan, Susan Neal and Tom Baker — is at the mercy of a trouble-making five-member majority: Sam Roop, Chris Medlock, Jim Mautino, Roscoe Turner and Jack Henderson.

Their very first council meeting was a harbinger of things to come: The meeting quickly turned into an incomprehensible donnybrook over selecting the new council chairman.

More serious missteps would follow. Some examples: refusal to annex lands needed for future growth and expansion of Tulsa's revenue base; refusal for no good reason to reappoint authority members known for their expertise and dedication; questionable choices for block grant funding; a misguided plan to investigate airport operations; stiff-arming of a new in-

dustry that will bring several hundred new jobs to a depressed area of town; murmurs about derailing a long-evolving regional water supply plan; controversy over the location of the new downtown arena, and so on.

You get the idea. So do many others who are watching.

Some officials in suburban cities reportedly are becoming suspicious and distrustful of Tulsa once again — an unfortunate development that could threaten the new, growing spirit of regional cooperation.

Perhaps the most disturbing message coming from this Keystone Council is that developers aren't welcome here. Some developers reportedly are holding off on Tulsa projects rather than go before this council and get turned down or, worse, be treated like a criminal. Others are heading to other communities.

"The signals are all wrong for developers to come to Tulsa now," says one long-time observer. "In Tulsa, developers are saying it's a lot easier to go somewhere else than deal with the problems they deal with regularly here."

Rezoning requests have dropped off in recent months, a trend that's partly due to the economy, and the ease of developing elsewhere — especially in development-friendly Owasso and Broken Arrow.

Rumor has it there is a movement to draft former councilor Art Justis, who lost to Mautino by fewer than 200 votes, if a recall effort picks up steam. A motto for the campaign has even been floated: "Justis for Tulsa."

In reality, however, recall isn't that likely. But maybe voters who sat out the last election will be motivated to go to the polls next time.

There's some reason for hope in the short term. Some observers think Roop, who showed he has genuine leadership and statesmanlike abilities in previous years, might come to his senses and distance himself from the fractious faction. There have been recent signs he is willing to rejoin the progressive and rational side.

Heck, maybe even one or more of the other councilors will have an attack of common sense. Stranger things have happened — especially over the last five months.

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## Kamikaze! (cont.)

### Oklahoma sailors remember WWII attacks

Writing an occasional column about an important moment in history carries a great fringe benefit. You meet people who were there.

I met John Stagner of Grove and Harold Knight of Owasso after writing a column, a couple of weeks ago, about the first big Kamikaze attack during the Battle of Leyte Gulf in World War II. Both were there.

Stagner was aboard the escort carrier USS St. Lo, the first American ship sunk by a Kamikaze. That was on Oct. 25, 1944.

Wounded and in the water for several hours, he was finally rescued. But, as far as the U.S. Navy payroll department is concerned, he has been officially dead — killed in action — since that date. He remained in the Navy for several months thereafter and was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, but was never paid for his service after Oct. 25.

Many years later, at the urging of family and friends, Stagner wrote an account of that day when the Kamikazes arrived.

An aircraft metalsmith, Stagner was working on a plane when the air defense alarm sounded. He ran outside in time to see a Japanese Zero heading straight for the St. Lo. It carried a 500-pound bomb under each wing. (Stagner would later learn that the plane was flown by Lt. Yukio Seki, one of the organizers of the Kamikaze project.)

Stagner ran inside and got under a jeep lashed down in the hangar area. One of the bombs exploded on the deck above the mess hall, about 60 feet away. He was hit by several pieces of shrapnel, but was soon able to move around and help other wounded men.

"It was a miracle I was not blown to bits," Stagner recalled. "The plane I


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was working on was gone, blown right out through the open door."

Two of his fellow metalsmiths, using a towel, put a tourniquet on his leg, and started to leave the area.

"Then came (another) big blast," Stagner remembered, "and the whole ceiling came down on top of me." His buddies saw the blast and assumed Stagner was dead. They later reported him killed in action.

In fact, he was unconscious for awhile, but recovered and managed to abandon ship. Along the way he survived still another big explosion that slammed a piece of red hot metal against his back and neck. He was rescued later in the day.

After a tour of several hospitals, Stagner landed at the advanced metalsmith school at the U.S. Naval Base at Norman. One day, his two friends who had last seen him disappear in that explosion on the St. Lo walked into a barracks where Stagner was on duty.

"John, it can't be you! You're dead!" one of them cried.

Stagner convinced the astonished sailors he was not a ghost, but he is still trying to persuade the Navy accountants. Some time ago, on advice of friends at the veterans' hospital at Muskogee, he sought the help of Rep. Brad Carson, D-Okla., who is working on the case. It will take some time, a Carson staff member told Stagner, but chances are he will eventually get his pay. Harold Kight had better luck. He was a cook on the USS Fanshaw Bay,

one of five other escort carriers fighting alongside the St. Lo in the same little flotilla — code-named "Taffy Three" — on that historic day.

The sailors and airmen were resting and recovering from a desperate battle with a vastly superior Japanese fleet of cruisers and battleships. The enemy force was led by the Yamato, the biggest battleship ever built.

Taffy Three took heavy losses, but the Americans made the enemy pay a high price, Kight recalled. The Japanese had pulled back.

On Oct. 25, as Kight remembered it, five Japanese planes appeared and one peeled off for each of Taffy Three's carriers.

The Fanshaw Bay, Kight said, was saved by a single shot from a five-inch gun. The shell took a wing off the Kamikaze plane less than a mile from the carrier.

The Zero fell into the sea and one of its bombs exploded just a few yards behind the carrier.

Kight was in the ammunition detail, passing projectiles and powder bags to that gun crew.

John Stagner, now 85, retired after 40 years as an iron worker and supervisor, working mostly on construction of new power plants. Harold Kight, 81, worked at the Douglas aircraft plant in Tulsa for many years. He still runs a small upholstery and furniture renovation business out of his home.

Stagner and Kight have outlived many of their comrades-in-arms of World War II. When anyone talks about the greatest naval battle in history and the first big Kamikaze attack, they are among the few who can say, "I was there."

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Associated Press file

U.S. Navy carrier St. Lo on fire after being bombed by a Japanese Kamikaze plane during the Second Battle of the Philippines Sea, off the coast of Samar in October 1944.