

MICKEY FRIEDMAN

Maxy for mayor



They all have Japanese names, these incredible yellow machines that now make Main Street their home. My favorite, Komatsu. But they all do amazing work. Thanks to their humans.

I've got a front row seat here at Fuel Great Barrington, and I admit to reverting to childhood. When I was a kid there were wooden barriers built at construction sites but the workers drilled holes so you could always peer in from the street at what was hap-

pening behind closed walls.

Whether you wanted the trees gone or not; whether you wanted the old to give way to the new or liked things the way they were, funky and quirky and sometimes chaotic, you have to be impressed by the way Maxymillian Construction is dismantling downtown GB.

The other day I spent from seven to eight at the front window watching the crane operator, like Seiji Ozawa, conduct a small crew as they took what used to be our street, break it apart and send chunks of it to a series of dump trucks. I never met the man atop Komatsu but I want to thank him for doing his job with artistry and efficiency and great care.

All the while he was perched above, there were others working below him, Komatsu's younger brother, the Kubota loader, zipping forward and back moving debris his way, all of them machines and men, trusting his skill, his toothy bucket zipping perilously close to their heads while they continued to work without worry.

Even though I was safe behind glass so many feet from the action I couldn't help but cringe sometimes at the incredibly slight margins for error. But this man atop his crane was a master with his heavy metal machine and managed always to miss his co-workers and come up with another full load.

Call it a street symphony or a mechanical ballet but we have all been treated to the best of messes. A pain in the neck, yes. A difficult time for our shopkeepers and their customers, absolutely. Dust and dirt and delay.

But my imaginary hat is off to the workers for the way they're doing this job. The other day several blocks were filled with hard-hatted folks dismantling our long buried trolley tracks, removing thick chunks of sidewalk and street, disappearing a tall light stanchion, all the while traffic flowed both

ways.

And so I have to say, this one merits a small gold star for my rough and tumble lasagna-loving always hiking Republican friend, Anthony. Which reminds me: do they still give out those sticky little gold stars to kids in elementary school? Anyway, score one for Anthony.

Because for many, many years we've had a running dispute about government vs. private enterprise.

Anthony is a big believer in the theory that government is evil and the idea that the more government, the more evil you have. It's fair to say that he believes that in general private enterprise is far more efficient than government. Along the way, he's provided me with quotes from several impressive sources, including a couple of Founders. No other than the very smart Thomas Jefferson said: "I predict future happiness for Americans if they prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them."

The author of some of the more brilliant of The Federalist Papers, James Madison wrote: "Since the general civilization of mankind, I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations."

Then there's Richard Feynman, the physicist/philosopher: "The real question of government versus private enterprise is argued on too philosophical and abstract a basis. Theoretically, planning may be good. But nobody has ever figured out the cause of government stupidity—and until they do (and find the cure), all ideal plans will fall into quicksand."

I'd just as soon skip Ronald Reagan ... because you get the point.

Which brings me to my modest and so very unexpected proposal: Maxy for Mayor. I mean they've done so well with downtown redevelopment why not let them try their collective hand at running the whole show. Crane guy and dump truck drivers and supervisors. Pooling their talents.

Sure they'd need a whole new set of blueprints. But we can give them our yearly budget and our to do list of projects. Maybe we can work with the School Committee and roll the Monument Mountain renovation into the deal.

We'd probably have to put the whole deal out for competitive bidding, but based on what I've seen from my front row seat, I'm betting Maxy has a really good shot at it. Of course, we'd keep our current personnel, but with Maxy as Mayor I'm sure we'd be getting the Max for the Minimum.