

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**Peter Schwartzman****There is something about Galesburg**

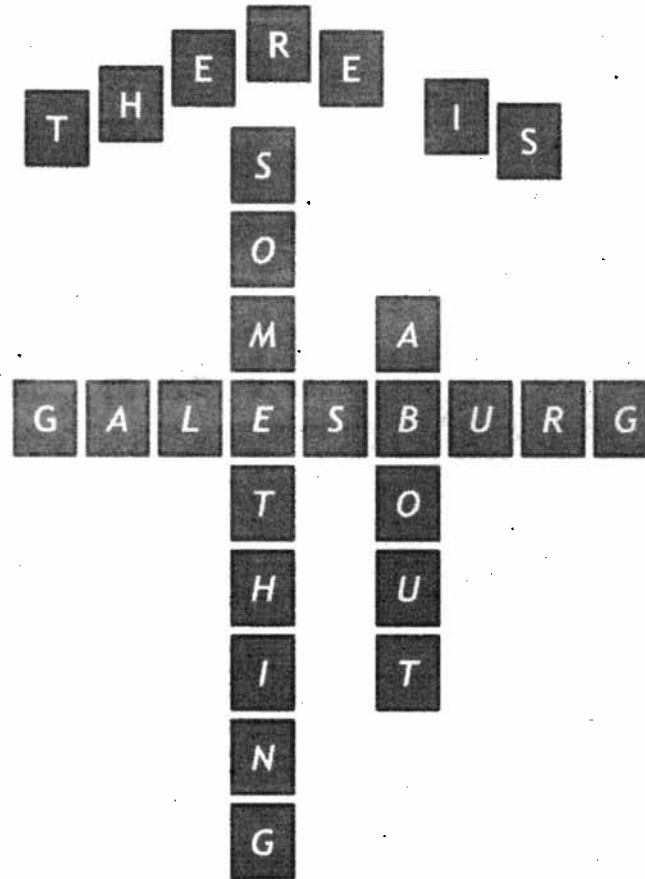
As the outside air creeps into the 90s for the first time this year issuing in summer, I sit in my somewhat uncomfortable house (as I don't use air conditioning) contemplating what Galesburg has meant to me over the past eleven years.

Having spent all but four of my first twenty-nine years of life on east coast (between North Carolina and Rhode Island), it was with a bit of trepidation that I moved to this relatively small community that I previously had known next to nothing about. For once, ignorance was bliss and I accepted reassurances from Knox colleagues that Galesburg was a wonderful place to live. Nearly a dozen years later and I definitely feel I made the right choice.

What is it that makes Galesburg such a great place to live? First and foremost to me, there is a sense of calmness and peacefulness here. Having lived in much busier places, there is something very reassuring about the serenity in the city. This is a particularly welcome characteristic in a culture where things seem to get busier by the day. Perhaps since we spend much less time in our vehicles than people in other places (largely because of the lack of traffic and the close proximity of essential businesses and services), we have more time to just relax. It shows.

Second, it is relatively easy to walk or bike places here. Living almost exactly one mile from my office, it is extremely convenient and very enjoyable to walk or bike when the weather permits, which outside of the winter is most of the time. Slowing one's mode of transportation during one's commute to work has many benefits. Not only does one get physical exercise, but one sees much more of their neighborhood. This later feature has imbued in me a deeper connection with Galesburg. Slowing down also provides me more time to think about things. Given how busy my day typically is, having a few extra minutes to think uninterrupted by phone calls or office visits has been invaluable. Additionally, the environmental benefits of walking or biking (rather than driving) are huge—e.g., virtually no greenhouse gas emissions, less need for parking lots, and reduced wear and tear on existing roads.

Third, Galesburg is small enough that almost all people



and places are accessible. City council meetings provide an opportunity for residents to speak and be heard during the biweekly events (and on television, as well). Most businesses appear to be locally owned and operated. This allows consumers to have more say and for owners to be more responsive to individual needs. Also, the size of the community allows people to be well-known and connected but still maintain a sufficient level of anonymity and privacy.

Fourth, Galesburg isn't too far from major center of

human activity. A three hour train ride gets one to the heart of Chicago. One hour of driving north or south takes one to active urban areas as well; two hours either way gets one to major universities (i.e., University of Illinois and the University of Iowa). Also, there are many wonderful communities, parks, and museums within the region that have a lot to offer visitors, namely, Bishop Hill, Nauvoo, Dickson Mounds (in Lewistown), Galena, Apple River Canyon State Park (near Galena), Quad City Botanical Center (in Rock Island), and the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (in Springfield). Galesburg affords residents the luxury of living in a peaceful area while still having access to the excitement associated with a metropolis or major cultural facility.

But one need not leave Galesburg for some excitement. We have many treasures right here that are worthy of mention. The Landmark's roasted garlic and peasant bread is to die for as is Cornucopia's one world salad. Discovery Depot houses almost everything meaningful for children to explore and learn. And Lake Storey provides outdoor relaxation as well.

Lastly, Galesburg benefits from the lack of a major energy polluter or hazard—such as a coal burning plant or a nuclear facility. And while there still exist several major polluters located within the city limits (a topic for a future article), Galesburg's air quality is likely much better than larger urban centers in Illinois.

All the above being said, Galesburg is not without challenges—too many empty downtown properties, too many jobless people to employ, too many high school dropouts, and way too many train whistles. These provide citizens, like you and me, with opportunities for improvement. I believe that the people of Galesburg will rise to the occasion and work to improve in these areas, for their benefit as well as their city's.

As I wipe a mid-afternoon sweat off my brow, I can look forward to a restful and rewarding summer in the "small" city I now call home. Thank you.