

Booze Woes Ruin City's Reputation

The Capital Times :: EDITORIAL :: A7

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

William Whitney Madison

Dear Editor: After reading the Jan. 1 New York Times article on Madison, I think it can be safely said that whatever tradition of "progressive liberalism" upon which Madison built its reputation has been trumped by a culture of public alcoholism that is out of control.

Now that this culture, and its gross and violent consequences, has been revealed for all to see in the nation's paper of record, it can no longer be hidden behind Madison's myopic and nostalgic civic ego.

I am a recent transplant to this city, moving here in 2003 for graduate school, and after expecting the city whose name I saw on numerous top five lists throughout the 1990s, I was immediately struck most by the dangerous feeling of its downtown streets on weekend nights. This after having lived in St. Louis, New York City and Boston. I never once felt as intimidated in those large American cities as I did after my first Friday night stroll down State Street, which became my last.

Since then, I have seen this city suffer under the hammerlock of its bars and taverns, who seem so bent upon self-preservation that they will breach any ethical lines to pour alcohol down the throats of this city's willing residents, with no regard for the consequences.

This city has problems that it refuses to confront or address, beginning with the fact that it seems incapable of grooming citizens (particularly its college students) who value nothing more than the consumption of mass quantities of alcohol. It's not all bad here, of course, but until something takes precedence as a public event over Halloween and the Mifflin Street block party, I will continue to look forward to locating myself and my family elsewhere for our future.