

## Welcome, Famous People

Welcome to Oshkosh, Famous People,

Let me start by saying, you're not the first. Harrison Ford, among many others, has been here for the EAA fly-in. Barack Obama was here just last month. But yeah, you're different. You're making a movie here. And in case you haven't noticed, we're kind of awestruck.

But heck, we're Americans, and Americans are a bit obsessed about fame. We'll do just about anything for fame, from the stuff we see on reality TV – Survivor and Big Brother and that ilk – to blogging and writing Community Columns (OK, not all that much fame here!). And by just about anything, I mean just about anything.

And there's the rub. Because there's not that much distance from fame to notoriety. And notoriety is not such a good thing. Albert Einstein was famous, for the amazing new ideas that he presented us with. But John Dillinger, your movie's subject, was merely notorious, for the crime spree he was able to pull off. Being noted is just fine, as long as it's for your accomplishments rather than for your transgressions.

And we've had a lot of famous people become notorious of late. Eliot Spitzer of New York, and Kwame Kilpatrick of Detroit. Not to mention Brittany-Nicole-Paris-Lindsay and a whole other segment of the Hollywood crowd. But that's the trouble with fame. There are a lot of ordinary people doing the same stupid things that Eliot and Kwame and Brittany have done. But once you're in the limelight, you're in the limelight. So you'd darn well better behave yourself, or else.

And the limelight is a strange place to be. During my two terms on the City Council, my face showed up in a lot of living rooms, twice a month, via Community Access TV. A lot of people recognized that face, and would come up to me, on the street, to talk about this issue or that. Which is of course part of the job of being an elected public official. But it's also kind of odd, that they're a stranger to you, but not the other way around.

My oddest brush with "fame" came when I was running for the State Senate. I was knocking on doors, some time in October, somewhere on the South side. A young girl, I'll guess 13 or so, opened the door, and immediately recognized me, maybe from the ads that were running on cable TV. She was visibly excited, and ran quickly to get her Dad. Then she returned, waiting for him to arrive, close enough to watch and listen, but not too close. Because there was a Famous Person at her door.

She would be about 21 now, not so easily impressed by a mere local political candidate anymore. Johnny Depp, on the other hand, can probably still set her heart aflutter. But I still recall being a little amused, and a little touched, by her simple, pure, naïve excitement.

But that excitement is a burden. It's an expectation, that I hope I came close to living up to. And multiplied by a hundred, or a thousand, or maybe a hundred thousand, and there you have the excitement pulsing through Oshkosh this week.

So welcome to town, Famous People. We're excited you're here, and we expect to be, well, dazzled. So please, dazzle us. Not by being somehow larger than life, the way we've seen you on the screen so many times before. But by being good people. People who are touched, and honored, by our naïve excitement. Because that's really all we're asking for.