

### Schools planning site improvements

By W.W. EDGAR

The little, old, red-school house is vanishing from the American scene. It is being replaced by sprawling combinations of concrete, glass and aluminum as models of modern architecture.

Now a movement is under way to replace the old, monotonous school yards that consisted of little more than a bit of lawn, a flag pole, and skinned surfaces in the rear for use as playgrounds. They are to give way to a development that will add charm and usefulness and include the involvement of the entire community.

One of the leaders in this quiet revolution is Mrs. Dorothy Cox, a sixth grade teacher at Westbrook Ele-

mentary School in Clarenceville. She has supervised development of the grounds at her own school from a drab environment to a series of nature trails and gardens that has caught the fancy of the surrounding community.

So great has this interest become that a similar movement is under way that will include four Farmington schools — 10-Mile School, Longacre, Wood Creek, and Middlebelt. There also is the possibility of a fifth — William Grace School — though the master plan has not yet been completed.

"This is not a beautification program," insists Mrs. Cox, a graduate in Environmental Education from the University of Michigan. "Rather it is a site devel-

opment program designed to become a series of outdoor classrooms for science and nature study which will be a valuable addition to the curriculum and a deterrent to vandalism."

Mrs. Cox began her development of the Westbrook site little more than three years ago, following a visit to the school of Environmental Education at Higgins Lake.

In the days that followed she has had her students develop several nature trails on the school grounds, erect playground equipment, plant flower gardens, and plant a hedge that serves as a wind-break for the school.

"We have done everything from laying out a football field to raising rabbits for a study of animal life," Mrs. Cox said, "and now most all

of our students are involved along with many of their parents."

The reasoning behind this quiet revolution is best explained by Mrs. Cox in a statement she prepared for delivery at the various school district assemblies to which she has been invited in a six state area. It reads:

"School sites have traditionally been as level as possible, as dry as possible, and as maintenance-free as possible, which bulldozes the hills, drains all moisture, and discourages any plant life larger than grass.

"This sterile, monotonous environment discourages creativity in play, offers nothing toward curriculum enrichment, adds to the heating bill, and is rarely used

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LOST CAT — Debbie Stratford, "Charlie" and Jennifer Richards are all together. (Evert photo)

### Dogged determination?

## Charlie walks from Florida

By MARTHA MAHAN

FARMINGTON— If you're thinking of backpacking to Florida, talk it over with Charlie first.

Charlie has just returned to Farmington after a 1,300 mile hike from Sarasota.

Charlie is a cat, a three-year-old rusty orange Persian owned by the Edward Rupp family, longtime Farmington residents who moved to Sarasota two years ago.

Actually, Charlie's mistress is their daughter, Jennifer, who found him as an abandoned, scrappy kitten and took him home with her. But Rupp was fond of Charlie and took him along when he and his wife moved, leaving behind their now married daughter.

Charlie never really took to

Florida. Once earlier he disappeared and was found trotting north along the freeway outside Orlando. Then Charlie (if he will pardon the expression) doggedly set out again.

"That was a year and a half ago," she explained.

When Charlie got to his Farmington destination, he realized he had a problem. Jennifer no longer occupied the former family home on Farmington near 12 Mile Rd.

But that didn't faze Charlie.

Being an oldtime Farmingtonite, he headed for the Crisis Center at Cloverdale School.

Debbie Stratford, an Oakland Community College student who works as part-time clerk-typist at the center, fed and petted Charlie

through the day. But, having a jealous cat of her own at home, she left Charlie outside the school at quitting time.

A half hour later, she was back.

"He was crying when I left him, and I'm kind of a softie," she explained.

At Debbie's home, Charlie took over. He hissed her four-month-old kitten into submission, curled up in its favorite chair, slept in the bathtub and generally ignored Debbie and others in the house.

Later, in a telephone conversation with her friend Jennifer, Debbie described the stray cat.

"Good Lord, that sounds like Charlie," Jennifer exclaimed.

Jennifer hustled over and Charlie, "who never took to

strangers," she said, swarmed all over her with a great display of affection and recognition.

Skeptics scoffed, but Jennifer is convinced the cat is Charlie.

"I know Charlie," she insisted.

Jennifer theorizes that Charlie was picked up somewhere along the route and lived for a time with a family along the way, then took off again after a refreshing pause.

He was kind of skinny when he reached Farmington.

"You could feel his bones," Jennifer said, "but he'd kept his fur well."

One back foot looks like it might have been broken and healed by itself, she said, and he's just slightly lame.

But, overall, Charlie's in

good shape for a cat who trotted about 1,300 miles if he traveled by freeway plus another 60 miles if he chose the "scenic route."

To convince the disbelieving or doubtful, Jennifer has consulted a veterinarian who cared for Charlie when he broke a hip two years ago. The vet is tracking down X-rays he made then for comparison.

But there's no question about the cat's identity as far as Jennifer is concerned. "I know Charlie," she maintains.

At first the Rups thought of flying Charlie back to Sarasota.

The apartment where Jennifer lives forbids pets.

But, on second thought, the Rups figured Charlie might get loose again. So they're driving back from Florida to return him under guard.



PRAYER BREAKFAST—Robert McConnell, Dr. Mervyn Ross, and John Allen were featured readers at the recent Jaycee Prayer breakfast. (Evert photo)

### Prayer breakfast attracts leaders

FARMINGTON — Faith and football were features of the seventh annual Jaycee Prayer Breakfast last week.

A "Who's Who" of Farmington community leaders filled the room at the Holiday Inn where the breakfast was held. Representatives from both city halls, the schools, and leaders of the business community heard Larry Hand, lineman for the Detroit Lions.

Robert McConnell, Farmington Hills mayor; John Allen, Farmington city councilman, and Dr. Mervyn Ross, president of the Farmington Board of Education, were featured with religious readings.

Hand, who has played with the Lions for nine years, outlined his career from the days when "I played a total of two minutes" at Butler High, in a small town in New Jersey, to his present job.

The slogan "with the flu, we still won two" summed up his high school career, he said. "Maybe that's still

"I just love it — I would even play for half what I make now."

He favored changing the rules to taking the ball from where it was kicked, rather than 20 yards out.

Asked whether he really enjoyed the game, he said, "I just love it — I would even play for half what I make now."



LARRY HAND was featured speaker.

### Tax review boards set

Farmington Hills reapointed three members to the Board of Review, the board charged with reviewing local property tax assessments.

Robert Dateman, Andrew Siroca, and Harold Larsen will meet March 18, 19 and 20 to review the local tax rolls in the Farmington Hills city hall.

The assessors office requests advance notice by the end of February for an appointment with the board.

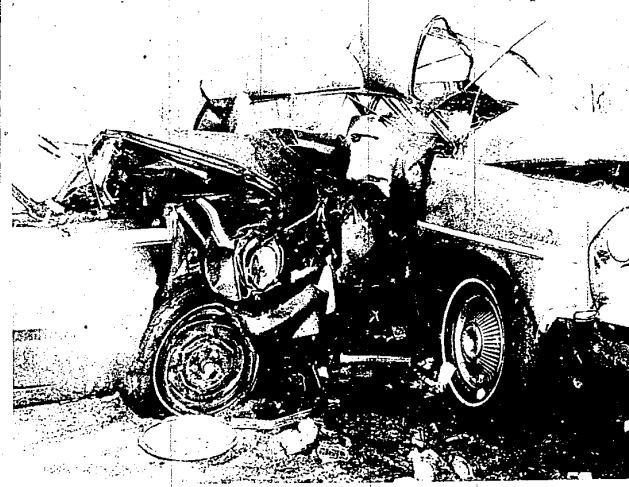
The Farmington city tax rolls will be reviewed by William Conroy, Frank Clappison and Baird Tupper March 5, 11 and 12.

Residents appealing their taxes should notify the board during February.

### Senior citizens name officers

FARMINGTON — Grace Carlin has been elected president of the Senior Citizens Social Club of Farmington.

Other new officers are Bert Johnson, vice president; Ruth Henke, secretary, and Kathleen Welby, treasurer.



First fatal blamed on ice

FATAL CRASH — James W. Gray of Taylor was killed in this crash on Middle Belt Rd. in Farmington Hills near 10 Mile Tuesday. Police

blamed slippery road conditions for the first fatality of 1974. (Photo by Ralph Evert)

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