

Country atmosphere logic is just an old dream

Temperatures are getting hot in Springbrook Subdivision. It seems folks out that way are a bit perturbed over the street paving proposals the Farmington Hills City Council has been bouncing around lately.

From what was said at this week's public hearing, resident factions are broken down between those who want asphalt paving and those who want to maintain the "country atmosphere."

Sound familiar?

Now I've been kicking around the Farmington area on and off for the last four years, and this split is a common one.

I'll lay my cards on the table right off. I don't have anything against country atmosphere, but c'mon, folks. Let's not kid ourselves. Farmington Hills ain't country.

I CAN SYMPATHIZE with those who have lived in the Hills when it really was country—back in

early township days. They have been engulfed by the latecomers who were running away from Detroit.

Strangely enough, though, it is the latecomers who howl the loudest when they think a tree is going to be cut down or a road paved.

It's the latecomers who must face the fact that they are cause of the needed paving.

The Detroit metropolitan area is still expanding in another five or 10 years. Farmington Hills is going to be just another medium-sized metropolitan area city.

It's a harsh reality, but residents should think wisely and be prepared for the inevitable.

Unpaved roads are bad news.

As one fellow said, "Who can enjoy the alleged country atmosphere when the road dust is so thick you can't see your neighbor's house?"

In some areas of town, it's so bad a person could get lost in a dust storm and never be heard

from again. The flooding is so bad in some areas of "rural Springbrook" that a guy is liable to drown in his automobile.

THE SAD NOTE in this entire issue is the folks around town who would give an arm and a leg to get their streets paved but can't afford it.

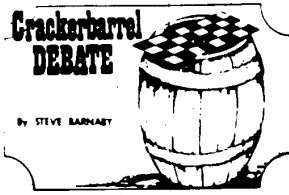
For some reason, it seems to line up along economic lines. Many folks in the north end of the city (it is a city—remember?) think that by keeping roads unpaved, they are maintaining a country atmosphere.

On the other hand, persons in the south end look at their dirt roads and cringe. Unfortunately many south enders just can't swing a grand or so in assessments to pave their streets.

Neither can they afford the numerous car repairs that come along with unpaved roads.

I recall covering a story in the south end a few years back. The roads were so bad I had to park on the main street and wade through the subdivision.

That's damned silly.



editorial opinion

'Neighborhood watch' cuts thefts

We are all concerned about the so-called crime explosion. In fact, it is not an explosion but a steady annual increase that affects more and more of our lives and businesses.

With all the financial problems government has, it is unrealistic to think that huge amounts of money can be spent on more law enforcement.

If you look at the suburbs, the types of crimes that are increasing are not the types that a couple more policemen on the force can eradicate.

In the suburbs, only occasionally are there rapes and murders. The day-to-day increases come from break-ins and enterings in homes and shoplifting in stores, neither of which can be easily observed by additional police cars patrolling the streets.

THE ONLY REAL answer is to get the citizens themselves involved. Yet we seem to be going through an era of non-involvement. Citizens observe crimes and turn their backs for fear that they might have to take time to testify or that the criminal might seek revenge against them or their families.

As Ben Franklin said, "To do nothing is to give way to evil."

Eccentricities

By HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.



Apathy on the part of the citizens seems to be our greatest block to solving the problem.

Some communities in the United States are really doing something about crime prevention. One of the most effective programs is called a neighborhood watch. Under this program, everybody in a community is asked to observe every one else, particularly his neighbors' homes when the neighbors are away, and suspicious looking people who are roaming the neighborhood.

The purpose is not to snitch on one's neighbors but to protect oneself.

In Seattle, burglaries increased 24 per cent last year in areas where there was no neighborhood watch, only eight per cent in neighborhood watch areas. The statistics are the same in Los Angeles.

Philadelphia and Chicago, where the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration is in the process of developing a national neighborhood watch program. There are more than 50,000 citizens involved in the Los Angeles program.

LOCALLY, the Birmingham Exchange Club is instituting the program for its community. The idea is quite simple. If everyone watches his neighborhood, strangers can easily be spotted and watched so that if anything suspicious happens, the criminals can be apprehended easily.

It takes a commitment on the part of citizens because it means they have to become involved. On the other hand, they will certainly benefit from the commitment of others in case they are victims of a crime.

Col. George Halverson, the director of the Michigan State Police, in kicking off the program in Birmingham, said, "Reluctance to be involved is to put the citizen on the side of the criminal."

Because the neighborhood watch program has been so successful in other parts of the country, other communities and other service clubs should seriously consider implementation of such a program throughout the suburban Detroit area.

The missing beer billboard and other secrets

On Kalamazoo's Stadium Boulevard, there used to stand a Drewry's beer billboard. When it disappeared, I didn't think much about it—until one day when I accidentally discovered the reason.

I had gone to the office of the secretary of the Western Michigan University board of trustees to pore through the previous year's official minutes when I discovered something the secretary hadn't intended to give me—the minutes of the unofficial meetings.

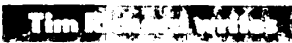
In one of these secret sessions, trustee Dorothy Upjohn Dalton remarked that it was an unhealthy influence to have a beer sign at the entrance to the WMU campus, and could the president do something to get it removed?

Well, in Kalamazoo, when you have an Upjohn on your board, you do something, all right. That was the end of the Drewry's sign.

But it's not the end of the story. The board also used a secret meeting to debate and decide on the closing of University High School.

LIKE OTHER college boards, school boards, city councils and township boards throughout Michigan, the WMU board had a lofty written rule about open meetings and the kinds of things that could be discussed at meetings.

But you can see the lesson: Once a board meets in secret to discuss one subject, there's nothing to stop it from discussing forbidden subjects. And in



point of fact, boards commonly do discuss a wide variety of things in secret.

That's one reason why it's so important to have a strong open meetings law in Michigan, something in the nature of the Florida sunshine law, and not one full of exceptions, loopholes and gimmicks.

The favorite loopholes are labor negotiation strategy, personnel evaluation, real estate transactions and student discipline cases.

YOU CAN SEE the psychology at work now in Lansing where the Michigan Senate is busily butchering a so-called open meetings bill (SB 920) until it isn't worthy of the name.

State Sen. Charles Zoller (R-Benton Harbor) got 26-7 approval of his vicious amendment to insert the word "formally" into the bill. He was supported by three local senators—Dan Cooper (D-Oak Park), Bill Huffman (D-Madison Heights) and Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth). Good ol' Bill Huffman (D-Westland) was against it, and Dan Bishop (R-Rochester) was missing that day.

Cooper had a badde of his own—an amendment defining meeting to exclude an "informational"

session. That was supported by Bishop, Huffman and Pursell with Faust absent.

You make one exception, and then everyone wants exceptions.

COMMON CAUSE gave it to the City of Farmington with both barrels last week for its secret meetings.

"We're not saying Farmington is doing nasty stuff," said Jan Elman, vice chairman. "We're saying Farmington is doing what is currently permitted under the law. But it's not good enough."

Let us add an important caveat to Mrs. Elman's remarks. We don't know whether Farmington is doing nasty stuff. We don't know if the Farmington Hills council, the Clarencville school

board, the Garden City council, the Schoolcraft College board, the Western Michigan University board and all the rest are doing nasty stuff. Baya Harrison, the former deputy attorney general from Florida, was in town last week and remarked that three county commissioners from his neck of the woods were recently indicted for their messy property transactions. The alleged wrongdoing was discovered because Florida has a tough open meetings law, he said.

It's important that those informational meetings be open. It's important that those informal meetings be open. It's important that those discussion meetings be open and that we always know with whom our governing boards are discussing something.

from our readers

Protection institute defended

Editor

Let me state in a rare individual in the category of outdoors writers, I'm referring to the column of Feb. 2 in which he points out the legitimacy of the Animal Protection Institute and its anti-trapping ads. We've received much evidence that out doors writers are only too eager to take the National Enquirer story at face value.

Let me in AP's response, condensed to the allegations.

The statement is made that the California attorney general's office says we collected nearly \$1 million in contributions in 1974 but never spent a dime on animals.

What would you call spearheading a national petition drive to ask Japan to stop slaughtering the endangered whales through public service advertising, we generated thousands of letters to the Japanese government and Japan, the major whale-killing nation, asked for a 10-year moratorium on the slaughter.

What would you call telling millions of people through the press and advertising media of the cruelty of the steel-jaw leg hold trap? Because of the heavy public information campaign here conducted, the anti-trap bill recently went to hearings in the U.S. House of Representatives. It also now has 95 co-sponsors.

What would you call introducing tourism in the Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence so people there would have an alternative to clubbing baby seals over the head each year? We were a part of the initial effort in 1974.

What would you call producing and distributing a 30-second public service announcement telling of the misery caused by overbreeding of dogs and cats? At least 28,000 animals were put to death in 1974.

What would you call cleaning up an Ohio dog pound? What would you call supporting legislation that would stop the horrors caused by the crate pet trade?

API does not operate a shelter. How would operating a shelter help whales, seals or trapped animals? The old concept

of humane groups existing only to help dogs and cats is far outdated.

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The Poles of civilization

Maybe we need a U.S. Supreme Court order against Polish jokes, the same way we got an order in 1954 against segregated schools for blacks.

The reasoning in '54 was that segregated school made blacks feel inferior. Today there's evidence that Polish-Americans are so accustomed to the stereotype of being dumb factory workers that they are losing self-respect.

That finding comes from Dr. Paul Wrobel of the Merrill-Palmer Institute in Detroit. An anthropologist, Wrobel interviewed several hundred Polish-Americans in the Detroit metropolitan area before revealing his findings to the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

It's an incredible fact for a race that produced Copernicus, the astronomer who figured out the

earth revolves around the sun; Marie Sklodowska Curie, discoverer of radium and polonium; Frederic Chopin, pianist, composer and inventor of the polonaise; Henryk Wieniawski, violinist and as fine a melodiast as Chopin; Ignace Jan Paderewski, pianist and composer; and all the rest.

Maybe the fault is with history texts, which treat Poland as a backwater in a stream that flows westward from Egypt to Britain and the U.S.

Or maybe the problem is that Poland had no independent political existence from 1798 to World War I and the Russians took credit for the things Poles were doing.

So quit pickin' on the Poles. The Poles pay a lot of beer taxes, and as Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "With taxes we buy civilization."

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Residents urge action

Editor

Thank you for your article referring that the life of a small human being is worth more than a passing investigation and small remedies. This child will be remembered.

Shock, and the feeling of hopelessness can be relieved if people will organize and use the political powers that be to effect change.

Join the PTA, the political party of your choice, the League of Women Voters, FISH, Youth Assistance or a church organization and take the time to be heard. You will find others who care as much as you do.

Then go to the city people and the board of education as well as the County and Federal people and tell them you care. Try and remember that, unless we stand and divided we fail and all the rest of that song.

Many, but not enough people, have asked that a good hard look be taken into many problems in our schools. Our community is not the only one fac-

ing problems in its school system, but Farmington Hills is a new city and can reach above and beyond its current difficulties towards a united community that cares first about people who live here and last about buildings and pathways. They look good, but human conditions that are dangerous or lethal to children and adults.

MARY ANN POLLACK,
Farmington Hills

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Limit letters to 300 words.