

editorial opinion

Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Where are the cows?

I wasn't working in Farmington Hills for very long of a time when I happened to come across a discussion of the rural character of the city during one of those marathon talking sessions the city council likes to call meetings.

At first I wondered who this rural character was. Probably some immensely popular yet eccentric old timer who lives on the outskirts of the city. I surmised, hoping to find a story to bring back to my boss.

After several more minutes of listening to the conversation between a homeowner and the council, it dawned on me that the rural character wasn't a person. Much to my amazement, these persons were talking about keeping the rural atmosphere of the Hills.

Now, I'll admit that Farmington Hills isn't a great, teeming metropolis, but I fail to see how anyone can seriously consider the area as possessing a rural atmosphere.

As time has gone on, I've come across many more residents who like the down home country living that the planned subdivisions of Farmington Hills has to offer.

Maybe my big city upbringing has blinded me to an obvious answer but I wish someone would tell me why residents insist on equating unpaved roads and the absence of streetlights with rural living.

PREVAILING THEORY among homeowners seems geared to the belief that country folks stumble their way through dark unpaved streets. If these mythical rural residents are unfortunate enough to be hiking it on a rainy night, then they find themselves stumbling around in the dark trying not to fall into a pool of muck.

I often wonder what people do for entertainment in the country. Somehow, I don't think that's the number one sport in cow country.

But it may be the top form of entertainment in the remote reaches of Farmington Hills.

When will residents realize that an unpaved road doesn't qualify this city to masquerade as a hole-in-the-wall country town?

When's the last time you overheard two farmers discussing feed prices during a lull in a Hills city council meeting?

When's the last time you found a stack of feed bags piled into a corner of one of the local department stores? It's been a long time, right?

When's the last time you drove down Orchard Lake Road near Glenview and caught the exhilarating odor of cow dung?

IT'S BEEN A QUITE A SPELL, hasn't it?

So where's the rural atmosphere in Farmington Hills, the little town with the administrators who constantly remind us that we're Michigan's newest city?

The area of Twelve and Thirteen Mile roads near Drake and Halsted are lovely. It's a remnant of the rural Farmington area that once existed. But it doesn't take a city planner to notice that the subdivisions, apartments and small industries are slowly but surely pushing their way into that area. And it's a way to go. But it's as inevitable as growing up. And refusing to put in sidewalks or light the streets so residents can pretend they're country squires is just as foolish as an adult acting like a teenager. It's just as futile too. The area is growing into a city whether we like it or not.

Whether we relish the prospect or cringe at the very thought, this one-cow town will be a real city someday. So let's quit stalling around in the dark and install some street lights.

And by the way, if anyone does run into an eccentric old timer who lives in town, let me know.

IT'D LIKE to hear his stories of the good old days, when Farmington Hills was considered country.

My Cup of Tea

by Loraine McClish

They're sweet on saccharin

I hear tell that Sherwin-Williams, the Cincinnati-based company that manufactures saccharin, is working night and day now cranking out orders to meet the demand for the sugar substitute that's in danger of being banned. No one mentioned who was making the demand though I suppose it to be hoarders or else America's next batch of black market dealers.

If the ban does come about on July 1, it will put canned fruit, diet desserts, diet pops, even common ordinary jello, jellies and jams off the already stringent list of foods permitted the diabetic.

The diet pops will be a particular hardship because while all foods for the diabetic are given in measured amounts, the diet pops can be taken without count.

The whole to-do will demand yet another readjustment for those suffering from the disease: persons who have already made major compromises to bring about a semblance of normal living for themselves.

After learning about the gigantic

doses fed to rats in the experiments that brought about the ban, one diabetic friend of mine estimated he would have to consume about 800 cans of diet soda a day in order to kill himself with saccharin.

Another wag computed that our friend would have to live better than 5,000 years in order to be harmed by his current intake.

MY FRIEND has his disease under control. He's a feet-on-the-ground fellow who has made peace with the sacrifices and compromises and he will cope and live.

But what about the kids?

What about the mother who goes into a tailspin every time she fails an Easter basket or a Christmas stocking? Or the lengths some parents go to in an effort to avoid the trauma of a Trick or Treat night with the diabetic child who is too young to understand?

Now, taking away even the likes of jello from the diets of some 10 million diabetic Americans stands on the threshold of a law that fails to take into

account any extenuating circumstances.

One extenuating circumstance is that no comprehensive assessment of the scientific facts, as they relate to human risk, has even been made. Another is the inordinate large dosages pumped into the laboratory rats.

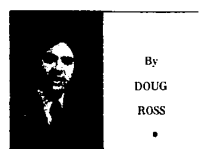
Both the American Diabetes Association and the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation are questioning the validity of the evidence that provoked the ban. And both organizations ask that citizens mandate their congressmen with requests to support the bill proposed by James Martin, a Republican Congressman from North Carolina.

The bill asks for a review of the matter, and postponement of the ban by the Food and Drug Administration, until the results of the review, and accompanying investigation are in.

In the words of Juvenile Diabetes Foundation president Leonard Wayne, "We've been investing the sugar substitute for 80 years. A few more months to allow for an investigation can hardly matter that much."

Citizens can win

Labels confuse shoppers



By DOUG ROSS

It was a familiar looking purple can that looked like grape juice. But, as I reached for the can to put in my shopping cart, I noticed it said "grape drink." I decided to read the list of ingredients which are supposed to be listed on all food packages.

The label said, "contains water, sugar and corn sweetness, concentrated grape juice, fumaric, citric and malic acid (provides tartness), natural flavors, vitamin C, artificial colors. Contains 10 percent grape juice."

I put the can back. Despite the clusters of grapes pictured on the label, the drink was mostly water and sweeteners. I didn't want to waste my money.

More and more shoppers are breaking the habit of rushing down supermarket aisles tossing products into their baskets. We want to know what's in the food we are eating. We're getting increasingly concerned with nutrition.

But, how can you tell what is actually in the products you buy? Which are the most healthful? And what is the impact of all of these different chemicals in our foods today?

THE FIRST STEP in protecting you and your family from dangerous or nutritionally empty food products is learning to read and understand labels.

Federal law requires the following information to be printed on all food package labels:

- Description of the product, such as creamed corned or condensed soup.
- Name and address of manufacturer, packer or distributor if you wish to write for additional information about the product.
- Word "imitation" must appear when a product isn't as nutritious as another, but resembles it and is often

used as a substitute.

- Exact percentage of an ingredient in a food item when that ingredient is combined with a less expensive, and the more expensive ingredient comprises less than 20 percent of the total food item. For example, if a pancake syrup contains less than 20 percent of maple syrup in combination with corn syrup, the label must state the exact percentage of the pancake syrup that is maple syrup.
- List of all ingredients in the food item in descending order, according to their weight. Thus if a cereal lists sugar as the first ingredient on the label, it means there is more sugar in that product than anything else.

If you're not used to reading labels, start checking them out. You may be surprised to discover that what you thought was food is nothing more than an elaborate concoction of chemicals and nutritionally empty ingredients.

Next week we will look at how to use labels to improve the nutritional content of your family's diet.



"Around the edge" by Jackie Klein

'You take—I'll pick up...'

Do you remember the good old days when a car pool meant two or three mothers getting together and saying, "You take, and I'll pick up."

In this modern era of technology and energy shortage, a few years ago a Southfield computerized car pooling system for employees and executives.

There were to be no more simple phone calls like, "Can you drive to work today?" My dog threw up all over my car. Those who wanted to participate in the computerized "Operation Energy" were asked to complete an official questionnaire.

Corporation personnel were to indicate on the questionnaire where they live and work, driving time to their jobs and how far they'd be willing to travel to pick up riders.

When I learned of the system, I predicted it would flop because of a number of flaws. As far as I know, I was right. But in case any other companies are considering pooling drivers by computer, here are some of the pitfalls.

Take a company that employs 300 persons. Two clerical workers get in the car. They've been matched by data programming. "Hello number 4788," one says to the other. "I'm number 4788."

"WE'VE NEVER been introduced, but I've admired that suit you're wearing for the past eight years. You

never know when it will come back in style.

Top management hops into an employee's 1964 two-door Ford with the fender dragging and the muffler that sounds like it has a terminal case of galloping consumption.

"There must be a foul up in the computer," top management grumbles, wondering why he left his 1977 Lincoln at home. "You must work for a pretty chintzy boss."

"Yes sir," the driver yells over the roar of the muffler. "I've been working for you for 10 years."

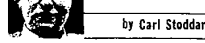
It seems to me the questionnaire should ask the weight of all passengers. Can't you see six guys, who tip the scales at 250 pounds each, trying to cram into a little Gremlin?

Either two fatsoes have to go on a crash diet or the car poolers have to draw lots to see who stays home. "I won't be able to come to work today," the fatter may tell his boss on the phone. "See you in three months when I'm down to 195."

How about the computer matching members of the same political party? A staunch Democrat might climb into the car grumbling, "This whole damn energy crisis was contrived by Tricky Dick to divert attention from Watergate and perpetrated by that numbskull Jerry Ford."

"OH YEAH," challenges the loyal Republican, "Jimmy Carter started this whole energy thing to divert attention

"Between the lines"



by Carl Stoddard

Why not green cows?

It was a two-room school house, the first week of kindergarten. Our assignment was to draw a picture with crayons. That seemed a simple task for a 5-year-old like me.

I drew a green cow munching brown grass beneath a purple sky. Mrs. Reagan looked at it and shook her head. "Something is wrong," she said.

These days, my wife says the same thing when I put on my orange socks, green slacks and lavender shirt. What my teacher discovered and what my wife knows (all too well) is that I'm one of those people who has trouble with colors. I'm colorblind.

For me, it's only a minor annoyance. For others, it seems to be downright fascinating or foolish, depending on their disposition.

Once in a college science class, the instructor began talking about colorblindness and casually asked if anyone was so afflicted. I raised my hand.

Within minutes, I was going from lab table to lab table with the instructor and one of those little books that

help spot folks with color perception difficulties.

You've probably seen the books. Most have pages with series of colored dots. Some of the dots are a slightly different color and symbols or letters jump out at you from the pattern. Well, those symbols or letters don't jump out at me. Some I can't see at all.

THE INSTRUCTOR flipped through this book at each table and I dutifully tried my best. My best wasn't very good.

"You mean you can't see this circle?" one girl asked, pointing at something on the page. "It's right there."

Another bright lad asked me, after witnessing my abilities, what color red appeared to be.

What color does it look like to you?" I asked.

"Red," he said, a little smugly.

"Well, tell me what red looks like," I said, "and I'll tell you if red looks red to me."

Colorblindness is an inherited trait. My mother's father had it and through her it was passed on to my

brother and me. I may be passing it on to my grandchildren, a fact that doesn't worry me much.

Colorblindness is a problem, not of the eyes, but of the brain. The brain "sees" colors but is not always able to distinguish what it sees. It's a little bit like being tone deaf. You may hear two notes, realize each is different, but not be able to tell what note is what.

Things can be done to correct all this, or at least make life a little more discernable about three years ago. Dr. Edward Stein, a Southfield optometrist, fitted me with a special red contact lens.

THIS LENS helped me somewhat to tell reds from greens, and traffic lights—for the first time—were easier to distinguish. But the lens didn't improve my ability to pick out my own clothes (maybe I just have bad taste) and it led to the suspicion among many of my fellow workers that I drank to excess.

In the end, I gave up the lens. It felt like a buffalo-head nickel stuck under my eye lid, it created a few too many stares and it changed the world I was used to looking at.

It reminded me of a story I once heard of a farmer who went to the doctor complaining of hearing problems. The doctor took a peak in the man's ears and pulled out half a pound of ground corn and dust. All at once the man could hear again.

He went outside and promptly got bowled over by blaring car horns, rumbling trucks, whining motorcycles and shouting kids. The farmer clapped his hands over his ears and went running back into the doctor's office.

"I liked it better the way it was," he said. "Put the stuff back in my ears."

from our readers

Stop using traps cruel

Several of our congressmen, including Representative Broadhead are sponsoring a bill to eliminate the cruel leg-loop traps for trapping animals. I hope your readers will support them in their efforts. In addition, people should know that there are humane traps available in Oakland County.

The Animal Control Center in Pontiac will lend these traps to anyone who wants to pick them up at their center, 1200 North Telegraph Road, Pontiac. They do require a deposit of \$30 for a raccoon trap and varying fees for others which is returned upon delivery of the trap to them.

We used one to catch a destructive raccoon and within a half hour of placing tuna fish in the cage, the raccoon was safely inside. He was later released in a wooded area of Kensington, where we were told to take it.

I hope you will publish this letter soon so that our area residents will become aware of safe, humane methods of trapping animals.

THOMAS JOHNSON
Farmington Hills

Small cars guzzle gas

Editor: Personally, I think our president's proposed tax on some vehicles is terribly unfair because:

At the time of the gasoline shortage scare two years ago I was driving a Mercury Montego that was giving me 16-17 miles per gallon. I traded it in on a Gremlin that won't give me more than 15 MPG no matter what I do or try. My husband has a Mercury Monterey that gets 18 MPG on the highway, my Gremlin won't get more than 16 on the highway. So, how can I proclaim that just because a car is physically smaller the mileage is better?

And, raising the cost of fuel will hurt only us middle class. My employers' wives drive to every garage sale within 50 miles and don't give a damn how much fuel they use because the company pays for it, as is the case in most corporations.

Finally, the motor homes that get very little MPG—the tax on these will be unreasonable. Why? People who have them don't drive them every day, mostly just a couple weeks a year and mostly retired people. And, when they are using the motor homes, they are not using fuel in their homes.

I would say our president is like a layman prescribing medicine without

a license. He is quite ignorant of the facts.

MAGGIE ARNOLD
Farmington Hills

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Limit letters to 300 words.

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