

editorial opinion

Memorial Day recalls Vietnam laughter, tears

John Black and I laughed together a lot.

Mostly it was crazy, nonsensical laughter in which young men away from home concentrate to relieve homesickness and the fear of the unknown.

We met during infantry training at Fort Polk, La. For three months we bummed around Louisiana, soaking up beer and generally raising hell in the conservative little towns dotting the map. Other times, we drove drill sergeants crazy with obnoxious antics.

As fate would have it, we ended up together in the same infantry company in Vietnam.

"How about this, Barnaby, we're going to fight the war together," joked Black in his Oklahoma drawl as we climbed on a truck to take us to Ninth Division headquarters buried deep in the Mekong Delta region.

With ruck sacks slung over our shoulders and M-16 rifles in tow, the two of us tackled the war with the same gusto with which we drove drill sergeants crazy.

WE WERE SCARED, but nobody would have ever known it, as we quickly became known as the pranksters of the company. Throwing smoke grenades into unsuspecting GI's bunkers as they escaped from the tropical heat, hiding fellow soldier's boots, dousing everyone in sight with beer, drinking with Vietnamese soldiers and swapping lies were only part of the antics.



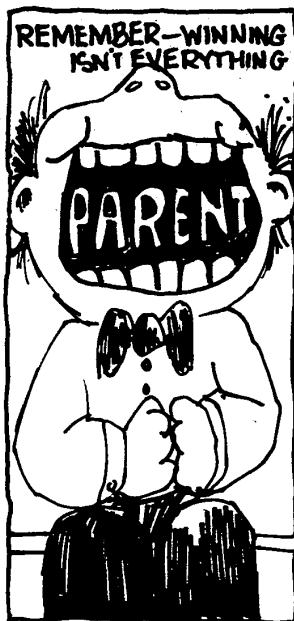
Vietnam was a new experience, and despite the rigors of war, we were bound and determined to enjoy it.

If one of us stayed back from a mission, the other would hold on to the wallet ("I don't want my social security card to get wet") and the letter to be mailed home—just in case.

One month after arriving in Vietnam, I mailed John's letter home to his parents, along with his wallet. After that, war was a serious business and the laughter was gone from my eyes and my heart.

And now, when I think of Memorial Day, I think of John Black, the way we laughed together and the letter I mailed home to his parents.

To war veterans and relatives, Memorial Day is a very special day.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

Who needs the Symphony?

The communities which are Detroit's neighbors have a vested interest in success of the drive to raise \$1.5 million in operating money for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

It's not simply that the Detroit Symphony makes good music, that our people like it.

The plain truth is that if the Detroit Symphony were to disappear, a lot of musical talent would disappear from such suburban orchestras as Plymouth's, Oakway's and West Bloomfield's.

The community orchestras use a lot of Detroit Symphony professionals in key slots. As first chair players, the professionals perform a leadership function that helps the local volunteers.

The big orchestra downtown is realizing it's more than just a Detroit institution. General chair-

man of its fund drive, which lasts until June 24, is a Bloomfield Hills resident, Philip Caldwell, board vice-chairman at Ford Motor Co. Increasing numbers of Detroit Symphony players have come to reside in our outlying communities. And the Detroit Symphony, which now receives funds from the State of Michigan but nothing from the City of Detroit, has acknowledged its obligation by performing outstate; you might even catch them in the Upper Peninsula if you're vacationing there in August.

It's nice to support the Detroit Symphony for altruistic reasons, but our own enlightened self-interest also leads us to hope Caldwell and his fund-raisers will be successful.

SEMTA needs sopranos

The ladies are up in arms these days about something they can't do anything about, and ignoring an issue they should do something about.

The issue they can't affect is the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, because the Michigan Legislature has already ratified and can't rescind it.

What the ladies should be studying is the politics of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority. SEMTA will spend literally billions on public transportation in the next few years, and women have a particularly important stake.

The new SEMTA board that took office in mid-April has 15 seats, of which four were awarded to women. Already, however, one woman has been knocked off the board, and a second is in danger.

THE AXE FELL last week on Julie Evans, Birmingham homemaker and civic activist. Mrs. Evans got her post originally from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments; but under the new rules, a caucus of cities, townships and villages was to pick three names and forward them to SEMTA for final selection.

Mrs. Evans irritated and even infuriated some folks on purely non-transportation grounds and developed a ring of enemies. She also was struck by philosophical lightning and became a convert to the heavy rail-subway cause. When the local governmental caucus met last week, her name wasn't among the final three contenders.

My purpose is not to make a case for Mrs. Evans personally, though she is a long-time friend, but to note that none of her potential successors is a woman.

RUMORS PERSIST that Beverly McAninch may also be under attack as her brief term draws to an end. Mrs. McAninch, a Plymouth city commissioner, must face the collective inspection, wrath and machinations of the suburban Wayne County commissioners.

There are those who are sore at her vote in favor of the light rail alternative SEMTA has adopted. There are those in the labor movement who are concerned that she is not under their thumb the way most other Wayne County politicians are.

Again, my purpose is not to make a case for a friend, but to suggest she shouldn't be replaced by a man.



Tim Richard

WOMEN LOOK at the world of transportation far differently than men.

Time and again I have seen hot-shot financial and engineering experts (male) from the SEMTA staff talk about the mind-boggling kinds of rapid transit technology that could carry folks to the downtown Detroit office district, and then they would be stopped in their tracks when a sweet voice from the League of Women Voters would ask:

"Yes, but how can I get to St. Mary Hospital to visit Aunt Minnie?"

Men tend to be absorbed by the big bucks, the economic impact of transit systems, the job-oriented trips.

Women have a concern for their sister homemakers who don't drive, for the kids who want to travel to the local library or a special exhibit, for the elderly who can no longer drive, for the handicapped, for those making less than \$20,000 a year, and so on.

THIS IS NOT to suggest that men are incapable of acting on such concerns. Men can care, but they need women SEMTA board members to remind them.

Virtually all top SEMTA managerial people are men; if the board becomes all male, our transportation system may not do the job.

If Beverly McAninch bites the dust and is replaced by a male union official, it will mean the only two women left on the SEMTA board will have come from Detroit and Ann Arbor, both of which have extensive local bus service.

There would be no woman from suburban Wayne, Oakland or Macomb counties to be the voice of the women, the kids, the elderly, the handicapped.

Forgo this ERA jive, ladies. SEMTA is where the action is.

Little League's trouble: Parents

A Boston sportswriter, many years ago, said the Little League system should be disbanded because it teaches 50 per cent of the kids how to be losers.

I guess I'm on the other side because I have always felt that we should encourage any activity that helps young people learn such sports as baseball, football, soccer and basketball to take them off the streets and give them pride.

The problem with the Little League system is not the kids; it's the adults.

We can use old clichés like: If winning and losing aren't important, then why keep score? But for some reason winning and losing are more important to parents than to a 12-year-old.

How many times have you been in a home when a young boy arrives home and the first question the parents ask is, "Did you win?"

Two weeks ago, as a dutiful parent, I attended a soccer game.

Along the sidelines, a group of mothers had arrived with their folding chairs, blankets and Thermos jugs.

During the first half they were riding the referee in very loud voices because they didn't think their children were being treated fairly in terms of the number of fouls called.

One mother started to use four letter words.

THE REF. TO HIS CREDIT, blew the whistle and told the coach to remove the woman because under the rules she was impairing the morals of the youth of Michigan.

The mother left forth one more epithet and was hustled out to the parking lot by the coach.

As she was leaving, she apologized to the ref and the ref looked at her and said, "Madame, don't apologize to me, apologize to the kids."

Last Saturday I attended another soccer game at Groves High School. The game was part of an official soccer league. During the game, the ball was kicked out of bounds, and it happened to roll over to the next playing area where the Groves High School team was having a baseball game.

The coach of the Groves team, after the ball rolled across the infield, grabbed the ball, hung on to it and refused to give the ball back to the younger kids playing soccer.

The referee of the soccer game asked the Groves coach for the ball, but he refused to give it up and put it under the bench of the Groves team, guarded by four hefty baseball players.

Why are the taxpayers of the Birmingham School District spending an awful lot of money on varsity athletics to teach our kids sportsmanship when the coach of the Groves baseball team is going to be remembered by everybody around that day as a poor sport?

BUT BACK TO PARENTS. The problem is that parents feel, as parental duty, they should attend games and encourage their children to victory. The kids, on the other hand, in most cases are trying to develop their early muscle skills to be good at something. At this stage, to the kids, being a good baseball or soccer player is more important than winning.

Parents should be supportive of kids' activities they deem important, but they should refrain from imposing some of their adult values such as to win is everything.

Adults must be very careful, too, that their actions are the kind they want their kids to imitate under similar circumstances.

To go to a game and make a fool of yourself is to teach your kids to do the same thing.

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER



'Suburbs' are communities

As any newspaperman (or politician) knows, words can conceal and deceive as often as they can clarify and inform. The trick is to take careful note of what they really suggest and then to test that against what's really so.

Take the word "suburb."

My American College Dictionary defines a suburb as "a district lying immediately outside a city or town, esp. a residential section outside of the city boundaries." Let's take this definition apart and test it against what's really so.

The dictionary starts by suggesting that a suburb is a "district," hence not really a city or town. But if you ask the residents of Birmingham, Plymouth, Farmington or Livonia—or any number of other "suburbs" in this area—whether they live in a "district," they'll look at you with a funny expression and say, "Why, no, we live in a city."

Do suburbs lie "immediately outside a city or a town," as the dictionary suggests? Rochester, West Bloomfield and Canton Township—just to mention a few "suburbs" in this area—certainly do not. They are separated from Detroit by other suburbs; and these, too, are not always immediately adjacent to Detroit.

Is Detroit the only "city or town" in this region, as the dictionary definition implies? Plainly, not so.

ARE THE SUBURBS a "residential section outside of the city boundaries"? Certainly many people do live in the suburbs, but the suggestion that the suburbs today are bedroom communities, inhabited entirely by people who work downtown is simply false.

As long ago as the mid-1960s, when the Transportation and Land Use Study (TALUS) was being conducted, it became clear that as many persons lived and worked in the suburbs as worked downtown. The trend toward increased numbers of jobs in the suburbs has accelerated during the past 10 years.

In fact, when the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority board met two weeks ago to decide the direction of rapid transit in this area, it was clear the majority of trips taken by people in this area were within a given suburb or from one suburb to another, rather than from a suburb to downtown Detroit.

Once set aside—in the dictionary and in our minds—as bedroom communities feeding workers and shoppers into the center city, the suburbs have changed and evolved enormously.

IT'S THIS EVOLUTION that provoked me to fuss with the dictionary definition of a suburb.

For I believe that the suburbs are no longer what the dictionaries say they are, just as I believe that unless and until we in the suburbs and others in the core city wake up to this fact, we'll all be making terrible errors of judgment about one another.

Obviously, the word "suburb" has continuing use. A suburb today is a community—any community—in a metropolitan area geographically near a large central city.

But the key is that today suburbs are not "districts," as the dictionaries say, but rather fully functioning communities—communities, in fact, with just as much community life as Detroit.

People work in the suburbs, and they play at suburban ball diamonds and at the Silverdome in Pontiac. People get higher education in community colleges (and even four-year colleges) located in the suburbs, just as they go to concerts in suburban auditoriums. People go to neighborhood bars in the suburbs, and they look at exciting art in suburban art galleries. People talk and visit and relate to one another in the suburbs in just the same way they do in the center city.

In fact, you could turn the argument around and say that any given suburb—a Plymouth, a Birmingham or a Rochester—has more community life within itself than the often split and disjointed city of Detroit.

WHAT IS REALLY going on is that the term "suburbs" has become out of date in today's world, just as has the term "center city." Suburbs are communities, just as are neighborhoods within Detroit such as Indian Village or Old Redford or the east side.

What has really happened is that people in this metropolitan area are living in one or another community, strung together like an interlocked mosaic throughout the area, rather than in the center city and the suburbs. And that the real question that affects the everyday life of people is not whether they live in the city or the suburbs, but rather whether their community is working as a functioning community.

So let's not be deluded into thinking, because the prefix "sub" is attached to communities in the suburbs, that there's anything inferior, subordinate or incomplete about them. Once we do that, our thinking about the city and suburbs is artificially and incorrectly locked into words and images that no longer reflect reality.

The wild Huron

It is still fashionable to contend that our state government in Lansing ignores the populous southeastern portion of the state. The truth, however, is that Michigan's natural resources programs are paying increasing attention to the corner where the people are.

We note with pleasure that the state Department of Natural Resources has placed a special designation on the Huron River as part of the "natural rivers" program. The purpose is to preserve the Huron's shoreline and ecosystem through appropriate zoning and land use regulations.

Thus, the Huron joins the lofty company of Ernest Hemingway's Two Hearted River, along with the Betsey and the Boardman and others in the north country. Keep up the good work, Lansing.

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