editorial opinion

Decoding newspapers is a scarcely-used skill

I've never been able to figure out why the American public learns how to read everything but the newspaper.

As a student, the average Joe learns how to read English literature, American literature, Chaucer, a choice of foreign language, Dick and Jane yarns, menus, traffic signs and, through force of peer pressure, the TV guide.

But nobody is taught how to read that most commonly distributed reading matter—the newspaper.

That's not to say that plenty of folks don't read newspapers. But it's a whole other question to knowing how to read that neatly gathered bunch of ink dropped on your doorstep.

Most persons just take it for granted that reading a newspaper is simply a matter of looking at the words. But that isn't so.

Learning how to read a newspaper is a skill that can enhance anyone's life. Through reading newspapers, a person can find out just about anything—past, present or future, learn where or how to do something, garner a whole lot of enjoyment out of life and become a well-informed voting citizen—an important plus in a country like ours.

BUT, INSTEAD many persons have sloughed off learning how to read a newspaper. And who can blame them? Educators surely haven't done anything about it. I've never seen one school district where a continuing effort is made to teach young persons this skill.

It's always been my feeling that a person should know a little bit about everything, and reading a newspaper consistently is a good way. Now, I'm not saying that you have to read every article in newspapers, but you should read at least one newspaper a day and, over the long haul, a lot of newspapers.

Straight news stories, in particular, fall prey to the uneducated newspaper reader. I could be a wealthy man if I had received a penny for every time someone called and said the newspaper hadn't covered an issue, had covered it inadequetely or didn't report this or that fact.

A little polite grilling almost always reveals that either a) the caller doesn't read the paper b) reads the paper only seldom or c) figures you should know everything that's going on in the world without being told by someone.

So readers, give it a thought. Learning how to read a newspaper is in your own best interest.

A visible reminder

Tragedy shocks us, but the next week we forget.

That is why this newspaper is joining police officials and public spirited citizens in producing something that will remind children who wear it and adults who see them that our kids aren't to be molested.

It's a T-shirt iron-on. It says, "Hands Off—or I'll Call a Cop."

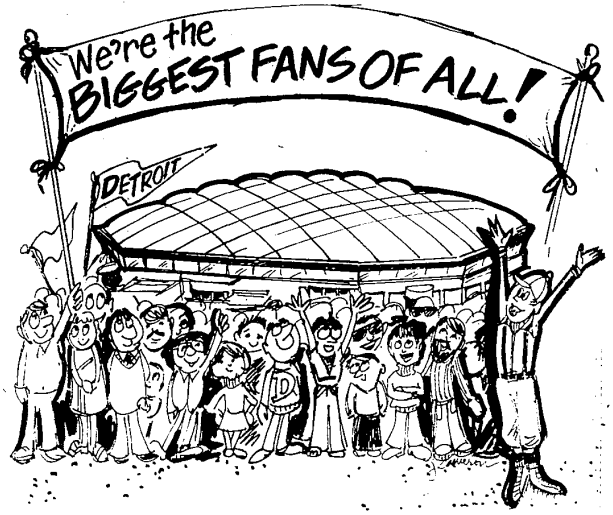
It will be bright red. It will appear in next Monday's paper.

No one is making any money from it. It was designed by volunteers from an idea conceived by volunteers and will be printed here as a public service.

What prompts it is the series of murders of four suburban children over the last year—Tim King, 11, Christine Mihelich, 10, Mark Stebbins, 12, and Jill Robinson, 12.

A task force of Oakland and Wayne county police is diligently but quietly working on the cases, which seem to follow a sinister pattern.

We'll also have ways you can warn your youngsters to beware of strangers without frightening them into utter lethargy.



Loyal, local pro grid fans deserve to see Super Bowl

When most people think of the Super Bowl, they think of sitting before their television screens the second week in January enjoying the finest professional football available.

To witness it in person requires somebody from our area to take a long trip to someplace that's warm.

The Pontiac SilverDome wants to change all this and has made a presentation to the owners of the National Football League teams to bring the spectacle to our area in 1981.

SOME PEOPLE say there's no way because there are no sun or beaches or golf courses in operation here at that time of year.

But Bruno Kearns of the Oakland Press summed it up very nicely when he said, "Fun in the sun, on the beaches and on the golf course is not what the Super Bowl is all about."

If you strongly consider the histrical fact, the NFL had its birthplace in the midwest. Consider that in nine franchise areas of the National Football League in the Great Lakes-Midwest region, stretching around Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Minnesota and Green Bay-Milwaukee, 80 million people reside within a 600-mile radius of the Silverdome. The midwest has the highest concentration of the nation's population.

IN THIS AREA is also the largest concentration of pro football fans in the country.

And these poeple in the midwest are the ones who have nurtured the great sport of professional football since its birth.

These are the people who, when the Canton Bulldogs were organized in 1905 or when George Halas got the Chicago Bears started in 1922, put up with the growing pains of football.

When football was started, the fans didn't say, "We will only support you if you play your games in total sunshine."

Midwest fans have supported the National Football League in ice and snow. They have supported it come hell or high water.

Midwest fans have supported the NFL in the Refrigeration Bowl championships, but their only opportunity to support the Super Bowl, started 11 years ago, has been in their living rooms.

The fans support the division and conference in championships without asking that anyone provide 70 degree temparatures or complete sunshine at kickoff time.

WHAT THE SILVERDOME is asking for is to give the people who live in the great midwest an opportunity to see the Super Bowl live. The game is the offspring of their home-town product. If only once in 10 years, these people deserve the chance to live the excitement of the game.

There is no question that the owners of National Football League teams know about Detroit and the SilverDome—its ability to seat 80,368 people makes it the largest football stadium in the National Football League.

Attendance at Lions' games since they moved to Pontiac has been at the top in the NFL. Other teams in the league are fighting each other to try to play games against the Lions in the SilverDome because they get a share of the gate.

If the game is to be given back to the fans, it should be held in the midwest. And the SilverDome is the only domed stadium in the area.

Midwestern fans who have supported the NFL over the years deserve to see the game on their own home turf.

Eccentricities

by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

Another lady is victim of good ol' statesmanship

Tim Richard

Three weeks ago, I noted that the Oakland County cities and townships bloc had dumped Julie Evans of Birmingham from the board of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) and nominated an all-male cast of three to replace her. I also noted that Beverly McAninch, Plymouth city commissioner, was rumored to be in trouble over her SEMTA seat.

If you haven't been following the news, it happened. The good ol' statespersons on the Wayne County Board of Commissioners dumped Mrs. McAninch, too.

Now there isn't a single woman representing the suburbs of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties on the SEMTA board. I have made the case for having several women on the SEMTA board—not necessarily those two, but several women—and there's no need to repeat it.

Let's look instead at the new SEMTA appointment process we are now saddled with.

IN THE GOOD old days—1968 to March of 1977—board members for SEMTA were picked by the governor (three) and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG, which picked six).

SEMCOG had an open process of picking SEMTA people. Candidates were invited in to present their credentials. Persons with some history of involvement in regional activities stood a better chance of being selected than persons with purely local backgrounds.

SEMCOG, as a seven-county regional planning agency, had more than a little familiarity with SEMTA's operations because SEMCOG adopted the 1990 master plan that SEMTA, as an operating agency, is to implement.

SEMCOG also had the advantage of being a forum for cities, villages, townships and counties. All interested governments were represented.

SEMCOG also appointed some women.

Last year, you will recall, the unholy alliance of William G. Milliken and Coleman A. Young, governor and mayor of Detroit, respectively, proceeded to gum up the works by giving the major SEMTA appointive powers to that mayor and to county boards of commissioners.

CONSIDER HOW the Wayne County Board of Commissioners operated as it dumped Bev McAninch.

She recalls being given "a very cold shoulder" when she attempted to discuss her reappointment with the commissioners. She wasn't told what day the appointment would be discussed, so she couldn't travel down to 2 Woodward Avenue at the appropriate time.

A suburban commissioner made the motion that day to nominate another person to SEMTA. One of my colleagues on these newspapers put in a call to the commissioner to get his side of the story. The commissioner wasn't in and didn't return the call; that commissioner rarely returns calls, we have found.

So Livonia Mayor Ed McNamara—an excellent man, a good news source and a friend—was selected to replace Mrs. McAninch.

Twenty-four hours after the event occurred, no one on the Wayne County Board of Commissioners had bothered to call Ed McNamara and tell him he had won. Nor had anyone from that august body bothered to tell Mrs. McAninch she was defeated.

I HAVE BEFORE me a letter from the Hon. John Barr, chairman of the aforementioned county board, in response to my column. He protests that he believes in "Women in Government" (the capital letters are his). He also tells me the appointment of Ed McNamara "is difficult to question when measured with an objective stick," which I already knew.

What he doesn't say, in 33 typed lines, is why Mrs. McAninch got the axe. Especially since Mrs. McAninch voted with the SEMTA members representing Detroit and labor, the elements which rigidly dominate the Wayne County Board of Commissioners.

SEMCOG's official position is that the Michigan Legislature made a mistake when it removed SEMCOG as the major appointing authority for the SEMTA board. SEMCOG is quite right.

Memo to the League of Women Voters, an organization which has done more studies of public transportation than any 20 county boards of commissioners: Pin our commissioners and legislators to the wall on this issue in the 1978 candidates' nights.

Regulations vs. the market

Observation Point

by PHILIP H. POWER

It is becoming increasingly clear that the long-term economic health of Michigan in general and these suburbs in particular very much depends on what happens to a number of bills now being debated in the U.S. Congress.

The automobile industry won a partial victory last week by getting a two-year delay in tightened exhaust emission standards, though there's still a question whether two years are enough.

And President Carter's energy-saving package had rough going, with preliminary votes in committees killing the stand-by gasoline tax and the proposed rebates on small, gas-efficient cars.

As both the auto industry and the UAW have recognized, if Congress winds up passing legislation that subsidizes foreign cars, or cuts demand for new American-made cars, or reduces the amount of labor required to make new cars, this area's economic base will suffer.

The auto industry has claimed for some years that it is being run as much by government regulations as by the forces of the free market. Last week reinforced the claim.

IN THAT REGARD, it is clear that two different theories of government are clashing over the country's energy policy:

- The free market theory holds that the best way to save energy is by gradually and steadily allowing the forces of the free market or the tax system to drive up the price of energy consumption so people will use less. This theory is espoused by Carter's advisors, who are mainly economists and hence inclined to think in terms of costs, prices, incentives and efficiency.
- The regulatory theory holds that the best way to save energy is by the government's regulating the ways industry and the public produce goods and consume energy, thereby spreading the burden of added costs equally. This theory is espoused by Congress, whose members are mostly lawyers, who are trained to think in terms of legal requirements, regulations and equality.

Oversimplified, the clash is between efficiency and equality.

AN EXAMPLE of more than passing interest has to do with the recently enacted law requiring the auto companies to produce cars that get more and more miles per gallon—an example of the regulatory theory in action. And only last week, Congress turned down the proposed gasoline tax, an example of the free market theory rejected.

These two congressional actions, taken together, simply make it cheaper for people to drive long distances (in high-mileage cars, using inexpensive gasoline) than they do today. The net effect would be to keep gasoline consumption where it is.

Another example of the clash between the regulatory and the free market theories is the area of home insulation. The president has proposed tax credits for people who insulate their homes, on the theory that tax incentives plus higher prices for fuel will encourage the homeowner to insulate and thereby save fuel oil. In contrast, the house energy subcommittee voted to require homeowners by law to insulate houses before selling them.

This raises a number of questions:

Is it fair to make people in Michigan pay more to insulate their houses before selling them than people in Florida?

What happens to houses which can't easily be insulated because of the way they're built?

What is "enough" insulation, or an "adequate" storm window?

You can be sure that all these questions, and many more, will be answered in a big book of numbingly complex regulations that your friendly government insulation inspector will bring by just before you try to sell your house.

CERTAINLY IT MAKES no sense to be ideological about this. Sometimes a carefully written governmental regulation is the easiest, cheapest and most effective way to make public policy work.

Equally, the economist's heartless concern about prices and costs needs to be balanced by considerations of humanity and equality.

But in many cases, a theory of government which uses the gradual and steady forces of the free market to allocate resources is likely to be both more effective and much less confusing than the tangle of red tape which the regulatory theory of government so often leads to.

Maybe—just maybe—over the next few weeks, the lawyers in Congress might learn something from the economists, and vice-versa.

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