

editorial opinion

Hors d'oeuvres by Lynn Orr
Street talk via Ma Bell

Some interesting phone calls this week prompted some armchair philosophizing from this end of the news room.

Kittens in paper bags, Moonies in vans with New York license plates, and parking lots loaded with broken glass were on the minds of some Farmington residents.

It seems some irresponsible pet owner decided the easiest way to get rid of a litter of kittens was to put them in a paper sack in the middle of Orchard Lake Rd. Two young women, Stephanie Allman and Andrea LeDoux called to tell us about this incident.

The young women were driving on the road when they spotted the bag after another car had done its damage, and the bloodied kittens were strewn about in the wake of the accident.

Pretty disgusting, isn't it? Ms. LeDoux thought so. Apparently paper bags are suburbia's answer to ponds. I guess we could be kind and ponder the possibility that the owner of the kitten litter didn't plan such an end for these unwanted waifs. But many pet owners don't seem to have much of a handle on the birds and the bees. It's about time pet owners took the responsibility of neutering their animals to avoid such problems. Or they could have the courtesy to take the pets to the Humane Society.

Better yet, maybe we could arrange to take the pet owners to the Humane Society. I'm sure it would be very pleasant for the driver who ran over a paper sack and discovered the kittens

were inside. Maybe he or she wasn't aware of that—I hope not.

Obviously nothing should be left in the middle of a road, except your car in a traffic jam. Swerving to avoid hitting things is a common enough cause of auto accidents. But that thoughtless pet owner didn't examine those possibilities before he or she stuck the bag in the street. Why do those kind of people own pets anyway?

NEWS IS the Moonies are back in town. A Farmington teacher called to tell us that Unification Church members (otherwise known as Moonies) have been plying their trade at local shopping centers. Selling flowers is how they're raising money for Rev. Moon this time. Now if people want to buy flowers, that's their prerogative. I wish someone would buy some for me. But please take your trade to someone other than a Moonie if you have a car in mind for me. I'd hate to think I in any way contributed to the Unification Church.

That flower moon goes directly into Rev. Moon's coffers. In fact, these young people out there selling have to make a quota before they can return home in many cases. The media has certainly covered the Moonies sufficiently so that very few of us could be unaware of the pros and cons of this particular group.

If you approve of the cause, feel free to contribute. But know to what you're giving your hard-earned bucks, even if those bucks come in the form of free. Too many people drop coins into offered cups without a concern. Yet those same people will rant and rave

about anything under the sun. A little more responsibility about what we do could show we care. That Farmington teacher asked the manager of the store if he was aware that someone was selling flowers in front of his store.

The manager in turn asked for the flower vendor's permit. No permit, no vending. But a van with New York license plates picked the girl up and moved her to another location. The teacher asked people who were about to buy flowers if they knew the Unification Church was the Moonies group. Almost all of them put their money back into pockets when they heard about Moonies. Perhaps that's the media's fault. We catch on to a word and forget to properly identify what we're attempting to elucidate. Responsibility gets handed out here all the way around.

BROKEN GLASS in parking lots was another complaint. The bottle law goes into effect next year, so maybe we'll legislate ourselves into responsibility in this arena. In the meantime, we've got to make an attempt to keep the irresponsible from poaching on public territory. Put your non-returnables in waste cans please. I don't for a minute believe that reminder will do much good, but it makes me feel better. I just need Tinker Bell round to spread some responsibility dust among the populace. Even my son knows that wouldn't work. People are pigs, he says. Yeah, I guess they are from this week's report. Let's hope for a little better next week. I tell him.

tinkering around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Put busy seniors on wheels

A Farmington woman I know, who has reached the age where others consider her a senior citizen, complained a while back that she and her friends didn't have any transportation in the Farmington area.

It looks like she took her complaint to the Farmington Commission on Aging because its proposal for a dial-a-ride type program within the two cities seems to be a good step forward. Perhaps mobility for seniors in an area that has thus far overlooked public transportation will become a reality.

Now I'm not knocking Farmington's Senior Citizen Taxi Service, but I am suggesting that it has its limits. Life doesn't end at the Farmington city borders and I don't think that I'll get any arguments from city administrators on that count. A taxi service with such geographical limits certainly ought to be supplemented by one that has the scope of the type which will be before the Farmington City Council Monday night.

If it works out, both cities will profit.

SOCIAL interaction certainly doesn't stop at the borders between the two cities. It's hardly realistic to expect seniors or anyone else to choose their friends on a geographic basis.

Another advantage that I can see to the dial-a-ride plan is that the bus will make trips to nearby hospitals, including Botsford, which is now off-limits to the Farmington Taxi Service because it's in Farmington Hills.

But I would hesitate opening up the bus service to youngsters. I don't think I'm contradicting my previous complaints that youngsters are a forgotten part of the cities. I am pointing out that if you want to open it up to youngsters, you may as well open it up to all other residents of the area, especially if you're using the argument that you want to include everyone in the service.

That argument indicates that someday the cities ought to take a good look at instituting a public bus line in the area, which would be open to all. Even in a fairly prosperous area like this, I'm sure that there would be persons who would rather hop on a well-run bus line than use extra gasoline in town. In an age when we're becoming more aware of the need to conserve, even the two cities ought to realize that there may be a demand in this area for that type of service.

ALTHOUGH THE CITIES are fairly quiet during the day, there still a number of homemakers who might be interested in taking a few hours off to

play tennis or cross country ski. They might be intrigued by the idea of an hourly bus line that would stop off at the local courts or golf club.

And then, you can take the teens and youngsters to wherever they might want to go. Some might like the idea of taking a bus to an after-school job or to the library. Others, of a more social bent, might use it to get to an after-school activity or a movie. If the cities get around to sponsoring more youth-oriented activities, the bus line would certainly pick up more business. Especially since there are parents in the area who don't have either the time, inclination or means to take their youngsters to an activity.

But until then, if the cities do go ahead with a dial-a-ride system, I hope they limit it to seniors, who were the focus of the plan. How could you take seniors to the hospital every week, or shopping, if there are other groups waiting in line to use these services? Expanding the service to others would also necessitate expanding the size of the dial-a-ride fleet. It's only common sense. Youngsters and seniors generally prefer to be taken different places. Buses, like persons, can't be in two places at the same time.

My Cup of Tea
by Loraine McClish

On anonymous letters

Dear Anonymous:

I received your letter this past week, but it won't be printed in our Letters to the Editors column because you didn't sign your name.

I would have enjoyed seeing it printed. You had a good point for our readers to ponder.

But I am compelled to follow a long-standing tradition that is pretty much followed across the board by all newspapers in the U.S., which is that the letter is not published when the writer doesn't take the responsibility for his or her opinion by not giving us a signature.

When you give any printed letter signed "Angry in Albany" or "Frustrated in Farmington," take my word for it: The original copy, with original signature (no carbon, no photostat) is filed away in some editor's files.

In these instances, the editor waives printing of the letter-writer's name for a reason dependent on the individual policy of the paper involved. For the most part, the reason is that if

push ever comes to shove, we're all protected.

We waived a signature once. It was a letter dealing from a senior citizen who was disturbed by neighborhood children, who was still further disturbed that a letter with her signature might bring retaliation. All other waivers I can recall here have all been along that same line.

We will not waive a signature for a parent, for example, who wants to use us to malign a school teacher. Another (common) example would be the opposition coming in for an attack on a political candidate without signing his or her name.

In both instances, we feel that the writer should stand up and be counted. In all instances the editor is keeping a weather eye out to keep every body out of court.

BUT YOUR LETTER was hardly libelous. Anonymous. You have a very reasonable request. Why did you choose to hide your identity?

As for anonymous letters we receive in this office, a guess would be that the most common is an attack on the school system. An attack on a local (rather than state or national) candidate runs a close second.

In the Farmington area, we have had but two big waves of anonymous letters in memory. One was during the Detroit riot in 1967, the other in 1972 when the school bussing issue was being fought in the courts. You didn't read any of them.

One of my fellow newsmen said recently he wished we had the technology to publish all anonymous letters to the editors exactly the way they came to us. I didn't have to ask what he meant. I knew he was talking about the raw spelling, the raw handwriting, the stationery that so often marks the character of the writer.

Anonymous. You expressed a valid concern and expressed it well. I sure wish you'd let us know who you are.



"Between the lines"

by Carl Stoddard

Nuke power: Yes or no?

Nuclear power plants are generating a good deal more than electricity these days. Some experts argue the plants are a serious threat to public safety. Other experts just as strongly deny the charges.

Here's a sampling of the arguments.

DR. JOHN GOFMAN, a Ph.D. in nuclear-physical chemistry and professor emeritus of medical physics, University of California, on the problems of long-term storage of nuclear wastes: "If we generate nuclear power to meet any significant portion of our energy uses, we create astronomical quantities of radioactive fission products and plutonium-239. The problem becomes, straight-forwardly, whether or not these substances can be perfectly isolated from the biological environment all most forever."

DR. GOFMAN: "For plutonium-239, with a half-life of 24,000 years, the requirement is roughly 99.99 per cent containment for some 230,000 years. Can anyone accept the credibility of those who casually reassure us plutonium containment will be performed flawlessly, under all circumstances, essentially forever?"

ATOMIC INDUSTRIAL FORUM: "Some 80,000 cans would hold all the waste produced by nuclear power plants to the end of the century. This compactness greatly simplifies the requirements for shielding and containment." Nuclear waste also can be stored in above ground, retrievable storage units. "They can be designed, built and operated to isolate high-level waste as soon as needed, for as long as needed."

an automobile accident is in one 4,000; from drowning, one in 30,000; from air travel, one in 100,000; from lightning, one in two million."

SOUTHWEST RESEARCH: "Minor" spills and leaks occur frequently. Some plants steadily leak small amounts of radioactivity, others have suffered ruptured pipes and explosions that released temporary amounts, still others have accidentally spilled thousands of gallons of radioactive material into nearby waterways."

ATOMIC INDUSTRIAL FORUM: "In nearly two decades of commercial nuclear power generation, there has been no injury to any member of the public, no radiation injury to any plant worker. This achievement did not come about by chance. Multiple and successive systems are furnished to protect against equipment failure, human error and severe natural events."

HANNES ALFVEN, Nobel Laureate in physics: "The technologists claim that if everything works according to their blueprints, atomic energy will be a safe and very attractive solution to the energy needs of the world. This may be correct. However, the real issue is whether their blueprints will work in the real world and not only in a technological paradise."

Citizens Can Win



By DOUG ROSS

Let's limit the lobbyists

Government decisions can still be bought in this country with a big bankroll and a good lobbyist. Even here in Lansing. And it's all perfectly legal.

Hard as it is to believe, it is perfectly legal in Michigan for a lobbyist to give a public official a gift of any value (a trip to Las Vegas, a free night at the track, unlimited use of a new car, a job for a relative) and neither the lobbyist nor the public official is required to disclose this gift to the public.

It is perfectly legal for a lobbyist to spend huge sums of money winning and dining public officials night after night. Again, neither party is required to let the public know who is buying and who is getting.

It is even legal for a legislator who controls the budget of an executive department of government to be paid by a special interest to lobby that executive department. In other words, under current Michigan law, it's legal to be a legislator and a lobbyist at the same time.

WHEN CONFRONTED with this shabby state of affairs, many Lansing legislators are quick to respond that no gift or series of expensive nights on the town can influence their votes.

"I eat 'yes' but vote 'no' is the way they usually put it.

But who really believes that? Certainly not the Lansing lobbyist corps. They have been bitterly fighting every reform effort to end the practice of special interest money being secretly spent on public officials.

It is becoming a basic question of who runs the government in this country. And if we citizens are serious about winning back control of our own democracy, we are going to have to do something about the enormous influence of special interest money in Washington and Lansing.

Here in Michigan, that battle has already begun. The Michigan Citizens Lobby and Michigan Common Cause, along with a number of other civic-spirited groups, are fighting for passage this fall of a state Lobbying Disclosure Act, Senate Bill 674.

Senate Bill 674 would do the following:

- Prohibit all gifts from lobbyists to public officials. There is no legitimate place for gifts in the public decision-making process.
- Require all gifts from lobbyists to periodically disclose the names of public officials for who they have purchased food and

beverage, and the amount spent on each occasion.

- Prohibit state officials from also receiving money from private interest groups to lobby state government. In short, you would have to choose: either be a legislator or a lobbyist, but not both.

IT IS A REASONABLE and long overdue law. But as you might expect, the lobbyist in Lansing and many legislators are fighting it tooth and nail—and under the old rules where lobbyists can spend money secretly.

If large numbers of citizens like you self begin pressuring your state senator and state representative for quick passage of Senate Bill 674 without weakening amendments, the bill will be enacted despite all the opposition.

After all, election time is only a year away. However, if we fail to write and phone our elected officials, the lobbyists will surely carry the day.

I believe nothing less is at stake than the growing self-government in this country. And, as usual, it's up to you.

Readers' forum

Letters must be original copies and contain the signature and address of the sender.

Limit letters to 300 words.

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