

editorial opinion

It's forgive and forget time as blues welcome a chief

Tinkering Around

Waiting for a better week

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Last week I had a chance to wander down to Farmington Hills city hall and meet the new guy in town. John Nichols, who soon will be taking over as the city's police chief.

While it was interesting to meet Nichols, a re-known figure in his own right; equally interesting was the chat I had with some of the command officers from the force.

Over the years the Hills' men in blue feel they've had a bad rap from the press, having to read about what I generally refer to as the "internal problems" within the force.

"They claim the problems aren't all that bad and that they've met the problems head on and have been able to solve them."

They claim that rehashing all the incidents of the past have caused morale problems and they want a fair shake to show they are, indeed, a team of dedicated law enforcement officers who are capable of working together in a professional manner.

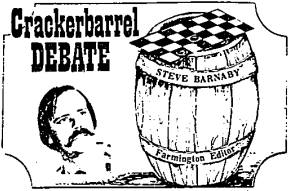
I'll buy that.

NOT ONLY will I buy that, but I think it's about time everyone involved on the law enforcement scene wipe the slate clean and start writing a new chapter.

Hopefully with the arrival of Nichols, we're not going to hear anything more about internal problems. The former Detroit Police Commissioner is a tough, but fair, cop. The command officers with whom I talked obviously were pleased with the acquisition of Nichols—even more so than when George Halverson was hired back in May.

That's the charm of Nichols, a non-nonsense type. People like a leader who takes charge. Nichols will do that.

As he mentioned at last week's press conference, he been chafing to get back into the driver's seat.



You've got to respect a guy who enjoys taking charge.

Nichols always has been able to command the respect of his officers and just as importantly, the public. For those of you who can push back the memory bank a few clicks, you'll remember the "Buzz the Fuzz" program where Nichols teams up with black radio commentator Martha Jean "the Queen" Steinberg.

During that program, which ran for more than two years, Nichols fielded questions from the public during a time when race relations were at an all-time low in the big city.

THE MOST impressive thing was that Nichols and Martha Jean put it over successfully and worked toward mending the racial wounds caused by the 1967 riots.

That's the kind of guy Nichols is—a person who is willing to grab the bull by the horns. I'm pleased to see Nichols come to town and look forward to covering his tenure as the city's top cop. Everybody, including myself, expects a lot from Nichols. I hope that he delivers and I also wish him the best of luck.

It wasn't until last Friday morning that I really began to think there must be something in this position of stars and moon business that some call astrology. Mainly, I call it nonsense. (We Virgos are a bunch of skeptics.)

But last week almost made a believer out of me. The last time I had such a bad week was several years ago, when I returned to my tiny East Lansing residence and discovered that my uninvited cockroach guests had become so numerous and cocky that they decided to rearrange the furniture. First time I ever heard of roaches raiding a human.

But that little incident was nothing compared to a steady, driven insanity that invaded last week. When I went outside the office to find some solace, I found that even my closest and dearest companions were stuck in equally bad weeks.

It was like a pox. Soon, everyone I know was wailing, "I can't wait for this week to end," and watching the hours slowly tick by on the large, easy-to-read office clock.

They had a long wait. At that point, it was only Monday evening.

It was little exasperating things that really wrecked the week. Take Tuesday morning (heavens, I certainly don't want it), for instance. After having indulged in sleeping a little later

than usual that morning, I found myself running toward my parked car, ready to hop in and roar off to work.

AFTER ALL, if I didn't roar off, I would be unceremoniously late for work and would have to contend with lost time and my boss' guilt-producing habit of not saying anything as the culprit walks in the door. He just looks up at you, raises one noble eyebrow and then resumes his work without giving you a clue as to what he's thinking.

Given that state of affairs, I know my car was probably delighted down to the points on its sparkplugs when I flopped into the driver's seat and turned the ignition.

It made a sound like a chronically ill baseball fan trying to give a Bronx cheer to an inept pitcher. It couldn't even manage a cough. It wheezed out its secret that its battery had gone to that great auto supply store in the sky.

This was also the week that I received my new car insurance premium. After proving to the insurance company that I drove well enough to be around when the time came for me to graduate into another price bracket, I assumed that my advanced years would garner me a small decrease in my payments.

Wrong. Somehow, it would have been cheaper for me to remain younger, I figure.

Soon, paranoia set in. Little things began to ruin my week. Like the time my dog tried to kick me down the stairs by tripping me with his leash. I know he did it on purpose.

THERE WAS a strange glint in his eye.

Then my mother, who always advised me to go to college and get a job, began to wonder why I hadn't made her a mother-in-law yet. She even arranged for me to go out with the friend of a friend of a friend.

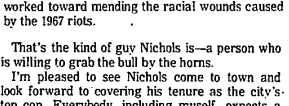
"He's a nice boy," she insisted.

Well, I thought, he won't be the first 35-year-old boy I've met. I wouldn't say he was dense. But I will tell you that I jokingly suggested we go water skiing on Lake Hartmanck and the next afternoon he showed up at my house with a boat in tow behind his Chevy.

I can't win. Finally, Friday, I managed to complain to a co-worker who had four interviews cancelled on her during the week. She did say a word. She just kept on working her tarot cards during her lunch break with a sage but sad smile on her face.

I just know it. It's in the stars. If you see me wandering around backyards in Farmington with a shovel, don't be alarmed. I'll be looking for old bomb shelters.

I need a place to hide, quick.



"Between the lines"

by Carl Stoddard

Kids' stuff turns bionic

The Christmas season is just getting underway. But from the books of it, Santa has turned his attentions to computers, outer space and miniature people built from leftover transistor radios. Most of the Christmas goodies apparently will let Junior and his sister act out their own versions of TV violence.

For example, there is the 13-inch Six Million Dollar Man that sells for slightly less in the schedule version. He comes complete with a bionic grip. But if that's not enough, you can order three additional arms, including a laser arm, a "Neutralizer Arm" that lashes out with karate chops, and an oxygen supply arm.

Giving the Six Million Dollar Man competition is another 13-inch character called "Maskatron", a faceless robot doll with three masks and two weapon arms.

For a little more money, you can buy your son "Electroman", a 16-inch character that sounds a warning whoop, banishes enemies with a bright light beam, talks in communique sounds and carries a photo-electric cell in his head.

A bionic Jamie Sommers doll is available for girls. More subdued than her mail counterpart—and cheaper—she is built with bionic modules in her ears, right arm and legs.

There is even a doll for the future executive looking for vicarious thrills.

Called the Oscar Goldman doll after the TV boss of the bionic duo, this little man comes equipped with a sports coat and—are you ready for this—a brief case.

IF BRIBECASES lack appeal, there's always a motorcycle and for about \$10 you can get one with Evel Knievel riding on top. The motorized toy pops wheelies and does just about everything the real daredevil does except fall off.

And of course, what would Christmas be without these standard favorites of red in most catalogs: Tommy gun, handcuffs, "Star Trek" phaser guns and even a target game that lets you shoot down a 10-inch bad man with a light beam.

For the more primitive, and for children three and older, there is a new "Jaws" game. Kids are supposed to use soft hooks to fish pieces of junk out of a shark's gaping jaws. Make a wrong move and CRUNCH.

Not all toys are oriented toward violence. Some are just plain silly. One doll turns tan in the sun and then fades in the dark. A Fudge doll gives you the thumbs up gesture when you push a button in his back. A Farrah Fawcett doll just stands there and looks like Farrah Fawcett. That might be a good doll for Dad.

For those looking to the future, toy makers have come up with a bewildering array of "Star Trek" and "Space

1999" toys. Apparently production started too early for "Star Wars" toys, but look for those later this season.

STILL OTHER TOYS will probably delight the oldersters more than the kids, who tend to like cardboard boxes.

At least a dozen different video games are on the market this year...with prices going as high as \$200. Gone are the not-so-old days when a video game was an electronic ball that bounced back and forth across the screen. Some new games let you play doubles tennis, hockey, handball, soccer and squash. Others come complete with a steering wheel for road races, a gun for quick-draw action or even a set of controls that let you convene your own tank battles.

The ultimate TV game can be programmed for 20 different games...everything from tennis to tank battles. For the more refined, and for those who like cheaper games, one company is marketing a rocket calculator that doubles as a Black Jack dealer. Flip a switch and it takes your money. Flip it back and subtract your losses. Then flip it back again and start from scratch.

If the game catches on, it will probably lead to a new bionic doll next year. Just pull its arm, its legs, and if you test tubes show up at the same time a pile of transistors will pour out of its navel.

Citizens can win

Negotiating the credit maze

By ZINA KRAMER
Editor's Note: The column is an expression of opinion of the Michigan Citizens Lobby and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

In this age of credit, each of us at times is forced to weigh present use against future cost. That is what credit is all about.

We must somehow make a decision as to what the value of the current use of an item is, as opposed to the price we must pay for it in the future.

But for some, credit is a vague term difficult to understand and even more difficult to establish.

There are a number of questions pertinent to acquiring and using credit which have been asked. Before getting into specifics, it is most important to remember that establishing credit in general is based on two concepts: ability to pay and willingness to pay.

Questions: If someone obtains a credit report on me, what kinds of information will it contain?

Answer: Generally a credit report will contain four basic kinds of information: 1) Identity factors—this will include your name, age, sex, and address; 2) Previous credit record—information about how promptly you have paid charge accounts, whether you have kept up with car payments, and whether you were previously repaid up with car payments, and whether loans were repaid; 3) Assets—prospective creditors will be interested in knowing whether you own your own home, car, boat, etc.; and 4) Character information—information about your employment record will be included. Have you been able to keep a steady job or have you had a series of jobs of short duration. What are your personal habits, do you drink excessively, and do you appear to have stable domestic relationships—all are possible inquiries.

Question: How can I find out why I have been turned down for credit?

Answer: According to the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, an individual who is turned down for credit must be informed of the name of the credit bureau which supplied the information. The individual has the right to check through his own file and see what kind of information was in his report. If the information is false and can prove it, the credit bureau must then correct the error and supply new information to those who were originally seeking the information.

Question: Although I am married, I am interested in establishing my own credit. What steps should I take to do so?

Answer: Recently the Federal Equal Credit Opportunity Act was passed, prohibiting discrimination based on sex or marital status. As a result, a number of retailers have informed customers of the right of a married woman to list her name on charge accounts along with her husband's. Therefore prompt payments of an account would be seen as a positive credit reference for the wife as well as the husband. This could be used as future criteria for establishing credit.

Married women can also open checking and savings accounts in their own name. This further establishes patterns for future references. Names used for such accounts should be in the

women's legal name. Thus Jane Smith would be a greater help in establishing a credit reference than Mrs. John Smith.

Question: Is there any point to shopping for credit?

Answer: There certainly is. The Federal Truth-in-Lending law states that interest rates given by various establishments be presented in terms of the annual percentage rate (APR). This means that establishments giving credit state their rates in common terms, making it easier for the consumer to compare total interest rates.

Finance charges must also be stated in simplified terms to enable the consumer to understand the exact dollar figure involved in charging goods.

publicly, only to be exonerated of all alleged charges, and now with the arrest of a clergyman on a morals charge, with his name and position in a community being revealed, before arraignment, for all to see and pre-judge.

How can you, the news media, possibly see any benefit derive from revealing this information at this particular premature time if that person is in fact guilty as alleged, and in custody, as compared to the irreparable harm done to that person if innocent? If you cannot see the imbalance and unfairness of such a situation, you are blind to the very moral injustice you seek to correct.

Our judicial system provides that an accused individual is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. However, by publishing the name of an individual accused of a sexual misconduct crime prior to his arraignment in court, at which time it is judged as to whether or not the evidence is sufficient to go to trial, is an unconscionable act. This is most especially true when that individual serves in such a position of unquestioned moral trust as that of a clergyman or police officer.

From our readers

Hills' resident defends gag rule, protests media injustice

better illustrate its need. BY REVEALING the name and position of the clergyman at the time he did, these "champions of the First Amendment" aid in removing a "head" from freely roaming the streets? By this act in violation of an existing law, did these "altruistic defenders" of a free press inform an unknowing public to beware of this "animal" should he attempt to impose his immoral acts upon another innocent victim? No, it did not. I submit that it accomplished nothing less than ruining the life and livelihood of a man who has yet to be formally brought before the court to evaluate the merit of any evidence to bring him to trial. If evidence presented at that

time is sufficient to go to trial, then an only then, need this information be revealed to a deserving public.

In revealing the identity of such an individual prematurely in highly sensitive cases such as this, I further submit that the news media morally violates that portion of the Fifth Amendment which declares that a person shall not be "deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." By this premature disclosure, if, and repeat, if, innocent of any crime, he has in fact been deprived of his most important property—that of his good name; and his liberty—the ability to work freely among his people as a man of God without the shadow of this incident forever follow-

ing him—without due process of law.

And you defend this atrocious violation of a man's dignity on the basis of the "public's right to know?" How dare you condone a muckraking attempt to "scopie the other guy" at the expense of a man's good name. How dare you decree a just attempt on the part of the legislature to protect a potentially innocent victim from the further harassment of a hairtriggered society prior to evidence being presented in a court of law.

You, the news media, are guilty of a far greater injustice than that which you accuse the legislature of imposing upon you.

ROY RUDOFSKI, Farmington Hills

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