

editorial opinion

Suburbs will survive, thrive despite attacks

We note, with tired amusement, the new attacks on suburban living conveyed to us by the field of sociology through the medium of the daily newspapers.

It reminds us of the engineer who studied the tumblebee's weight, wing size, wing speed, shape and other aerodynamic factors and concluded it was really impossible for the bee to fly. No one ever told that to the bee, however, and as of the last warm weather, bees were still flying.

And people are still moving to the suburbs.

THE SUBURBS, according to some sociologists, are supposed to be terrible places to raise kids. Kids don't get to see the place where the family breadwinner works and so are supposed to be insulated from the economy. Kids don't get to the cultural facilities that the big cities have. There is no balance of ethnic and age groups such as the real world contains. Kids are supposedly dulled by over-exposure to the middle class.

There is no need to trot out sophisticated arguments to deal with this anti-suburban sophistry. It's quite enough to say that if so many folks want to live here, there must be something right with the suburbs. Despite the great numbers who profess to detect a "rat race" here, the bottom line shows growth, popularity and satisfaction with the suburban lifestyle.

WHAT CRITICS can and do overlook is the pioneering spirit of suburban communities—the only places, it seems, where there is such a spirit observable.

When a new lawn goes in, there is a spirit of helpfulness much like the barn-raising spirit of the 19th century settlers. Many suburban institutions are of such a tender age that participants still have a chance to form them, without the chains of tradition.

Suburban kids in metropolitan Detroit are actually closer to more jobs than big city kids simply because there are more jobs here in the suburbs. And suburban schools are making heroic efforts at career training, as this newspaper's tour guides can attest.

The ethnic imbalance charge comes the closest of any to the truth. While there is certainly racial imbalance, the lines between other ethnic groups are blurring. A member of an ethnic group commonly need not feel as defensive as he would in a large city.

Looking at voting patterns, we would even venture to say that white suburbanite are less worried about the race than are Detroiters—just look at the votes piled up in 1974 by Secretary of State Austin and Wayne County Sheriff Lucas in suburban precincts.

THE AIR in the northern and western suburbs is the cleanest of any place in the metropolitan area. If we are starting to witness such "big city" problems as drugs and prostitution in the suburbs lately—well, we still have a sense of indignation about the beginning, there is no need to defend the suburban lifestyle from the attacks of authors. Any community attitudes survey we've ever seen indicates people are realistic enough to know their community isn't perfect, but they like it just the same.

Conventional wisdom says the suburbs are all right—just like the bees.

Know your candidate

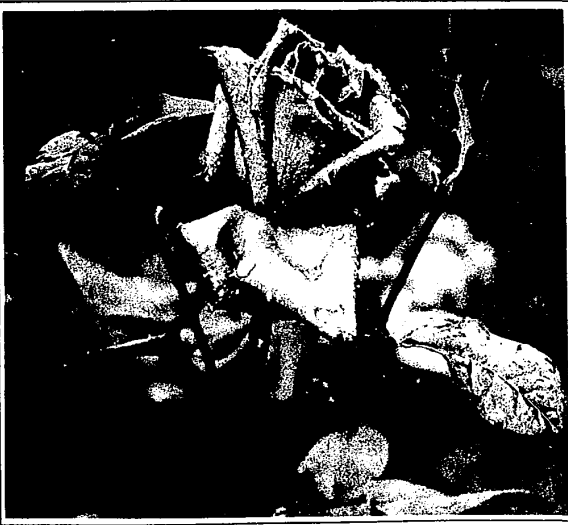
Michigan's attorney general, that guy Frank, with the curly hair, is going to be a candidate for reelection.

The reason we know this and announce it so confidently is that he has resumed his weekly column called "Know Your Michigan Law." The last time we saw such a column was four years ago, just before he sought reelection.

If the pattern holds, we may expect a flurry of announcements from the attorney general's office between now and Nov. 7 instead of the once-in-six-months pronouncement.

Let's see, here's the mail: The attorney general will oppose the rate hike request of Indiana & Michigan Electric Co. . . the attorney general charges Pauley Oil Co. of Coldwater, its president, officers and agents with numerous violations of the Michigan Uniform Securities Act. . . he announces (a week after everyone else) that General Motors will offer \$200 and a three-year, 36,000 mile extended warranty to any Michigan citizen who purchased a 1977 Olds, Pontiac or Buick before April 10, 1977 but received a car with a Chevy engine. . . the attorney general and the director of DNR announce that Dow Corning Corp. of Midland has agreed to pay 10 per cent of the total cost of the cleanup of the Ankersen Incinerator site in Pontiac.

My, my, what an active attorney general we have all of a sudden.



Nature has cornered the market on "ambiance."

Ambiance: Life can be made beautiful

Ambiance means environment or surroundings, or the totality of supporting objects surrounding or enhancing the central theme or subject of design.

Ambiance is the combination of the little things that create atmosphere, which can transform a hamburger into a state dinner or four walls into a home.

It is those extra little things that create character to the simplest things in life. If your power goes out, you can curse the darkness or you can read a book by candlelight curled up in front of a roaring fire.

You can take the most ordinary meal, turn the lights down low, add candles, flowers and wine and be spiritually whisked away to a foreign land or new world.

AMBIANCE COSTS very little, yet requires maximum creativity. It's not always practical; sometimes it may be artificial; it can instill a feeling of well-being—even fantasy—and help you escape the rigors of the cruel, hard world.

It requires an extra effort which is contrary to the efficiencies that are drummed into us by time and motion specialists. It's the frills that we are taught to cut out.



It can be considered wasteful. A fire in the fireplace, experts now say, increases your heating bill up to 20 per cent because it sends already heated air up the chimney, drawing cold outside air in through the cracks around windows and doors. Yet no one seems to be measuring the degree of comfort or well-being one feels as he stares into the bed of glowing coals.

AMBIANCE IS a natural Christmas tree with homemade ornaments instead of an artificial metal monster that can be used again and again.

It is the soft lights instead of the high-intensity bulbs, and stereo music from several speakers spaced around a room instead of the blaring from a single speaker in a television set.

Taming the highway bureaucracy

Once again State Highway Commission members Peter B. Fletcher and Weston Vivian are rapping the knuckles of the department staff, this time for wanting to spend \$2 million and four years studying alternatives to the M-275 freeway in western Oakland County.

It is just three weeks short of a year ago that the highway commission voted 3-1 to cancel M-275. Yet despite all the research that supposedly went into the design of that freeway through the lakes area, the department staff claims it's back to "square one" in designing alternatives.

That's a toughie to swallow. Those of us who aren't in the road designing business may be dumb, but we're not that dumb.

THE REMAINDER of Oakland County—even communities that wouldn't touch M-275—have a vested interest in the outcome of the problem.

One reason is that the non-existence of that freeway has a ripple impact on all other major roads in the region. The impact may even extend as far as I-75.

Another reason is that we in the eastern and central Oakland suburbs need ways to reach the rest of the state in the west other than the present bumpy two-lane roads.

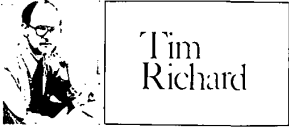
What Fletcher and Vivian are complaining about is a classic—one might even say, pluperfect—example of policy makers versus the bureaucracy.

Members of the highway commission are appointed by our elected governor. When criticism of the staff comes from Fletcher and Vivian, it deserves to be taken all the more seriously because it is bipartisan: Fletcher is Michigan's Republican national committeeman and personally very close to Gov. Bill Milliken; Vivian is a former Democratic congressman.

I recall hearing Fletcher say at a September meeting: "I do not understand why I cannot get the attention of the state bureaucracy." What he meant is that no matter what the policy-making commission decides, the department staff keeps muttering, "M-275 . . . M-275 . . . M-275."

THE HIGHWAY commission members are dead right. It's quite apparent the department staff is dragging its feet in proposing alternatives to M-275.

I have just finished re-reading an August 1977



staff summary on M-275 and Northwestern Highway which fairly reeks with snide remarks about alternatives, and this was six months after the highway commission thought it had made a decision to cancel.

That report still praises M-275 as "justified, based upon the demonstrated reduction in travel time and user costs, reduction in accidents, energy savings and an improved service to the motoring public." If I had presented a proposal to General Manager John Reddy about how this newspaper should be run and had it rejected, and still contin-



By W. W. EDGAR

Like countless others, the Stroller has been going through life at a leisurely pace, taking things for granted.

Naturally, he was thrilled when he sat up until the wee hours of the morning to watch the first astronauts step on the moon. But after the first, the others seemed matter-of-fact and, like many others, he felt that if you saw one landing you had seen them all.

When the big, new Concorde jet was launched and cut the scheduled time to cross the Atlantic in half, he read about it in the public prints and sighed, "So what?"

From time to time, he has read accounts of the great things being done in the medical profession. He was thrilled to learn that great strides are being made to combat cancer, and there are equally great advances being made in the replacement of kidneys in human bodies. But great as they seemed, they were more or less taken for granted.

THEN, OF A SUDDEN, they struck home, and The Stroller now is convinced we are living in an era of miracles . . . and the end is not yet in sight.

The great awakening came when Leona, the Stroller's helpmate, who had been suffering from arthritis for close to two decades, could stand the pain in her knee no longer.

In the midst of tears one morning,

ued to hassle him publicly that way, I would expect to get fired. Yet the highway department staff just won't give up.

It seems that "all alternatives" would "encourage strip development." Without analysis, it brushes off the Lakeland Parkway idea as one in which the state would "be unable to participate." The ideas of Citizens in Opposition to M-275 are dismissed as unacceptable. And so on.

ONE WONDER if the department staff isn't simply stalling for time, hoping a new governor in 1979 will appoint new members to the State Highway Commission to replace the likes of Fletcher and Vivian.

If that's what the staff thinks, it doesn't know Michigan politics very well, it doesn't know Pete Fletcher and Wes Vivian very well, and it doesn't know the tenor of the times very well. M-275 is dead and has been for nearly a year. So let's get on with finding other ways to handle Oakland traffic.

The Stroller
The era of miracles

she sobbed. "I can't take it any longer. I am going to get a new knee."

In other days and in other times, this would have been an idle statement, brought on by the pangs of great pain. But not now.

So with the courage of someone going off to war, she entered the hospital with great confidence, and in due time, she had her old knee replaced with a new one.

"Look," she said, "I haven't straightened my leg in years, and now it is as straight as can be. And I can bend it to."

To The Stroller, it was a miracle. No longer could he take things for granted. Here it was performed in his own family, and it came like manna from heaven.

IN DUE TIME, Leona was walking out in the yard again enjoying the shrubs and flowers and possibly walking better than the Stroller, all because of the modern miracles.

It was ironic that on the day she was given her new knee, the Stroller received a letter from an old friend back home. He hadn't heard from the friend in more than a year.

"I haven't written to you," the letter started, "because I have experienced a great thing. I tired of the constant pain in my hip and last February when I no longer could stand it, I decided to have

it replaced. And what a job those doctors and surgeons did at the University of Pennsylvania hospital!

"I walked on crutches for a month, then walked with a cane for several more, and now I am walking a mile and a half every day with no support except my new hips. It is marvelous what strides have been made in the medical world."

WITH THE LETTER still in his hand, the Stroller couldn't help recalling an experience he had at the last annual "Slog" dinner sponsored by Mendocott Country Club when Bob Lytle, the Michigan football star, was being honored.

He was seated next to Bob Calihan, the former University of Detroit athletic director, whom he knew as a sufferer from arthritic pain.

In the middle of the meal, Bob, one of the finest fellows one could meet, arose and with the trace of a tear said, "I've got to leave. My pain is just too much."

One had to pity him as he ambled out to the car. But today there are no tears of pain in Bob Calihan's eyes because of his arthritic hips. He has two artificial hips. What's more, he now is considering having one of his knees replaced.

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