

# Farmington Observer

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Howard Johnson shows off his skating form with friend and fellow skater Blanche Schauer. (Staff photo by Harry Maute)

## Rollerman Senior finds skates

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY  
When Howard Johnson turned 65, he was far from ready to retire from his antique shop on Vernier Highway. But bowing to family pressure, he gave up his business and tried to settle into retirement. Shortly afterward, Johnson discovered roller skating and a rinkful of new friends.

Now a Farmington Hills resident, Johnson celebrated his 71st birthday with his skating friends at Bonaventure Roller Rink. Skating is a natural hobby for Johnson, who started out as a dancer for small traveling shows around his hometown of Cleveland. After traveling through Pennsylvania, Maryland and other eastern states, he went to New York.

"I joined Act's Equity. That's how I got started," he remembered as he took a break from skating. "I was with a group, so it wasn't hard in New York. We were in the big shows on the legitimate stage. I was in ensembles, where four of us danced with a woman."

"We did seven shows a week, then it wasn't like vaudeville. They did three shows a day. They changed casts every week," he said. "I DIDN'T like that." He shook his head for emphasis. He danced for three years until he turned 21. By then, talks were coming into their own. Attention was shifting west.

"It was 1929 and we were all going to California," he said. "But my sister in Cleveland said to come back home and I did."

Instead of settling in California, he came to the Detroit area. For six and a half years, he worked as an auditor at the Whittier Hotel, Detroit. Then, he moved onto his own business, an antique shop on Trumbull.

When he first quit his antique shop, he moved to a house in Dearborn within sight of the municipal roller rink. At first he thought the rink was a fountain. Then one day, he walked over for a better look and discovered children were roller skating there. Intrigued, he started skating with the youth center classes when he was 65.

He kept on skating when he moved into Farmington Hills. After finding apartment life too quiet, Johnson moved to a house on a main road so he could listen to the street sounds. "I love that traffic," he said.

Traffic noises and young friends help him forget that he's supposed to be in retirement. He boasts of keeping an "immaculate house." When he's not skating, he's busy with the Finnish Cultural Club, Farmington Hills, or the Detroit Yacht Club.

"I KEEP BUSY," he said. "That's the way to keep young. I love young people. I'm not ready for the senior citizens' outfits. That's not my thing," he confided, leaning his pink skirted elbow on the cafeteria table.

Nearly, his skating friends are enjoying the rink along with the cake brought in for Johnson's birthday. He visits the rink about six times a week.

"When you're skating, the people you meet are your friends. You're never lonesome. As long as you skate, you have friends," he said. When skating with his friends, observers can see Johnson gliding through the small group on the rink, head held erect and arms out at the sides in a dancer's stance.

The 71-year-old who went to New York to dance has aged into a graceful skater.

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## Top coach defends district physical fitness program

By LYNN ORR

An Oakland University professor led the Farmington Chamber of Commerce astray when it comes to physical education in schools, charges Jack Cotton, Farmington School District athletic director.

O.U. Prof. Joseph Arends contends that public schools cater to the minority of skilled athletes among the student population, thus perpetuating a negative lifetime approach to physical fitness.

Arends' criticisms are based on outmoded approaches to physical education, Cotton contends.

"It's a dark ages thing," Cotton says. "Athletics are not physical education."

Farmington, for example, has been a leader in promoting physical education for all students, Cotton says. In his 22 years with the district, he has seen the public's attitudes change toward health and fitness. And the schools have motivated and exhibited these changes, he argues.

"I don't buy it that physical education programs are bad. We are looking at them all the time, and we're looking at what's best for kids."

FARMINGTON employs physical education teachers in the elementary

buildings full-time, like many districts in the metro-Detroit area. That's unusual nationally, Cotton says. But even comparison with neighboring districts proves Farmington's leadership, he says. Physical education is mandatory through 10th grade.

Elementary children receive physical education instruction four times a week with few exceptions. In Novi, elementary students see a physical education instructor only once a week on the average. In Livonia, physical education instructors move from building to building, thus limiting the frequency of physical education instruction in the elementary program.

Although many classroom teachers take students to the gym for activities, it's not the same as a planned program, Cotton says.

The district's physical education program itself weakens Arends' theories about public school education, Cotton says. In Farmington, an emphasis on health and fitness takes precedence over competitive athletics, he contends.

Cotton sets guidelines so individual instructors can base their programs on objectives for the students. Learning to throw a football isn't part of the game plan, he says.

IN kindergarten through fourth grade, basic movement, rhythmic and percussion activities, and games of low level organization are stressed, along with the introduction of physical skills. In the third through sixth grades, dance skills and some team sports are introduced.

Individual sports aren't introduced until the sixth grade, and a strong emphasis on physical fitness is one of the basic guidelines for junior high physical education, he says.

In ninth and 10th grades, life-time sports are introduced, including a strong emphasis on dance.

"We're trying to develop an awareness of the value of activities which enhance cardio-respiratory endurance for life," Cotton explains. Students still play basketball during gym periods, but they also learn about activities which can be carried into adulthood.

Cross-country skiing was introduced at Warner Junior High this year, while East Junior High students learned the finer points of outdoor camping through a lecture by a local camping outfitter. Those are examples of how the district's instructors are encouraging physical fitness, Cotton says.

"There's no corollary at all between football and baseball and physical education," he says.

He hopes to see physical fitness stressed even more in the years ahead.

"We're trying to develop an approach so that kids can figure out their own physical assessment. What do you have to do to be physically fit for life?"

It's a more academic approach to the awareness of physical fitness, along with a "better marriage" between health and physical education, he says.

The schools can't be responsible for a total commitment to physical fitness, he also argues. The community has to see the need for providing avenues for the encouragement of physical fitness, he says.

For instance, there are a lot of joggers in Farmington. Cotton would like to see a jogging track in one of the city parks similar to one in Eugene, Ore., made of woodchips and sawdust. He'd also like to see more support of the YMCA's efforts and less emphasis on private clubs.

"To me, clubs are a huckster's approach," he says. "Belonging to a club isn't a necessary part of physical fitness. It takes sweat to get there, not money, and it doesn't come easy."

## Visit to Lebanon brings war home

By LYNN ORR

Within four years, the hustle and bustle of one of the most advanced nations in the Midwest has been replaced by militarily enforced order. But the placid surface of southern Lebanon fails to camouflage the dark intensity of warring factions beneath the surface, says Farmington Hills resident Joe Alkateb.

"It's boiling internally," says the Southfield businessman who sits on the Hills City Council. "You get the feeling there's a volcano there."

Alkateb visited his home nation a few weeks ago during a business trip to Kuwait. Since his last visit home four years ago, he encountered a massive change in both the physical surroundings and the Lebanese people.

He confronted one aspect of that change soon after his arrival at Beirut Airport. Within a 22 kilometer ride to his hometown, he was forced to stop at 11 barricades manned by Syrian soldiers.

"THE FIRST barricade was three miles outside of the airport," Alkateb explains. "The Syrian soldier looked at our passports and the ID cards of my family and let us go. Another five miles and we had the same story."

"The scary thing was that some of the barricades consisted of a barrel with some shrubbery in it."

On the second day of his visit, he experienced what many Lebanese fear. After stopping for a barricade and heading for a soldier with a response, Alkateb's brother began to drive off.

A soldier armed with a machine gun ran out of a nearby shack. "He told my brother 'I swear that your life is long.' He was very late but finally let us go. The story goes that many Lebanese are killed through these kinds of incidents. Someone might not see a barbed wire or soldier and the shooting begins. Or one soldier might say to go and the other might shoot at you."

"It's very obvious that Lebanon is under Syrian occupation."

For Alkateb's family, that's become a way of life. "They've developed a sense of acceptance—they have no choice," he explains quietly. His brother's home in Beirut has been occupied by strangers.

His family is Druze, a sect of Islam that is not Muslim per se, he explains. They're caught in the middle of the warring Lebanese factions that Alkateb describes as a war between the right and the left.

Alkateb objects to describing the internal Lebanese war strictly as a fight between Muslims and Christians. One faction of Christians wants to make Beirut and Mt. Lebanon into a Christian nation separate from Lebanon itself he explains.

"If it weren't for the Syrian troops, the intent was to wipe out the Maronite

district where my family is," he explains.

"My estimation is that the battle hasn't started. The real reasons for the war are still there. The intent to create the national Christian homeland was the real cause."

Major streets have been wiped out and machine-gunned buildings look like sieves, Alkateb describes. It will take 100 years to blot out the psychological damage, he says.

"The hatred that is developing between the right and the left is unbelievable," he says. "My nephew was talking about military things I've never heard of. He's 6 years old and he knows every weapon made."

Alkateb left Lebanon one day before Israeli troops made excursions across the southern border of the country after an attack by Palestinian guerrillas on Tel Aviv.

"If I hadn't left then, I'd still be there," he says. "It's not the first excursion of the Israeli troops into Lebanon. It's been going on for several years." The southern Lebanese are the innocent victims of all of this.

"The Israeli strategy is to make the Lebanese hate the Palestinians, and it works. I think the Israeli excursions border on the tactics Hitler used against them. As long as there's no home for the Palestinians, you create desperate people."

## ERA issue hits home

By LYNN ORR

Farmington Hills will get a chance to join a handful of cities across the nation in support of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Councilwoman Joanne Smith is pushing for a pro-ERA stand from the Farmington Hills Council Monday night in the form of a boycott of the states which have failed to ratify the ERA.

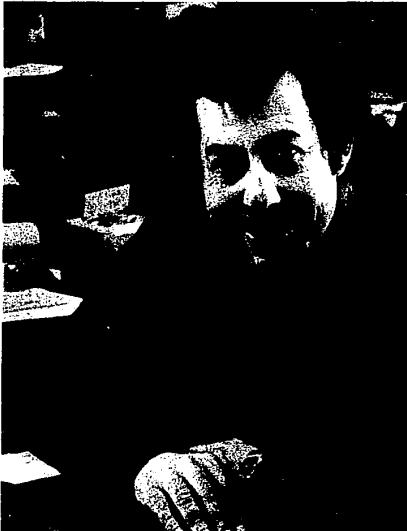
She's putting her convictions into a resolution calling for the city not to fund conferences for city employees in states that have failed to ratify the amendment.

Cincinnati, Ohio, and Ypsilanti are two of the cities which have joined more than 100 organizations by aiming a financial strike at states like Nevada, Arizona and Illinois.

"Hopefully, we aren't going to send the people we employ to states that can't recognize that every individual is indeed a person," Ms. Smith said Tuesday.

She also plans to carry her battle to the Michigan Municipal League conference in Lansing this week.

"I hope enough pressure will be brought by the National League of Cities in this effort. I think colleges



Lebanese-born Joe Alkateb tells what it is like behind the lines in his native land where the Israeli Army is searching out members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. (Staff photo by Harry Maute)

## Rights boycott looms

should join too."

A MAJORITY of women on the council leads Ms. Smith to believe she'll be successful in passing the resolution at Monday's meeting. She hopes Councilmen Keith Deacon, Joe Alkateb and Earl Oppenheimer will join her efforts.

"I think this is their test," she says. Alkateb is opposed to the resolution.

"I'm going to vote no because I think it's a political ploy," he says. "It sacrifices a lot of benefits the city derives from being able to go to these places." Alkateb says he supports the intent of the ERA.

The proposed resolution has some problems, says City Mgr. George Majors, who refused to give an opinion about the resolution.

The boycott against holding conventions and conferences in anti-ERA states puts pressure on the cities and consequently the state legislatures, Majors explains. A secondary boycott on attendance at such conferences may be the source of legal problems.

"It penalizes certain professions that gain a great deal from conferences. These aren't junkies," he says. "I

don't know what this resolution will say. Will it apply immediately and for how far into the future?"

City Atty. John Donahue indicated that a secondary boycott such as proposed by Mrs. Smith might be challenged.

MS. SMITH believes a boycott is an effective protest.

"At one time I didn't wear Farrah shags, and for a long time I didn't eat grapes. Every cause has to have people willing to stand behind it," she says. "Where would we be if we didn't have peaceful solutions like sit-ins and boycotts for our problems?"

Majors said he didn't know if the approval of the resolution would affect proposed conferences for city employees this year. The International Management Association's conference, which he plans to attend, will be held in Ohio, a state which has ratified the ERA.

The pro-ERA forces have less than a year to add three more states to the 35 which have ratified the constitutional amendment.

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