

editorial opinion

Hors d'oeuvres by Lynn Orr

Where are the candidates?

Circle "a" or "b".
 *I'd rather spend the first Tuesday evening of the month: a) watching a movie; b) attending a school board meeting.
 *I'd rather: a) swirl some brandy in a snifter while reading the latest best-seller; b) attend a school board meeting on the third Tuesday of the month.
 The quiz gets harder.
 *I'd rather a) do the laundry; b) attend a board committee meeting.
 Attendance at Farmington Board of Education meetings over the last few months indicates the "b" options would receive few takers. I can't say I'm surprised. School board meetings can be tedious, dull, and trying, in spite of any efforts made for efficiency and / or wit.
 One gives an "A" for effort to those who survive the rigors of four years on a public body which reaps little praise and heaps of criticism.

CANDIDATES who meet the filing deadline for petitions today will be vying for two seats on Farmington's school board in the June 15 election. Trustees Bill Gravius and Anne Struble are not seeking reelection, which means we definitely will be seeing some new faces on the board this summer.

Where have those faces been for the past few months is my question.
 The candidates will have to face that question

elsewhere I suspect. Admittedly, board meetings can be a bore.

How else does a candidate discover current issues, problems, and potential solutions? Politics can be tricky as well. It's one thing to have a good idea; it's another to be able to get that idea across to six other board members.

Although boards of education often like to don a non-political face to the world, there's a lot of shuckin' and jivin' that goes on to get things done.

That's the way it is.
 I'm concerned that these candidates we'll be "discovering" over the next two months are going to have some credibility problems unless they get their acts together right quick.

IF YOU want the job, you've got to pay the price. Dull meetings are one of them, gang. Once in a while, they're even fun, and most of time relatively routine.

Lots of work for little effort is another price. If anyone expects to get elected on the basis that he or she is willing to tackle the job, one only can hope voters have the good sense to deny them the opportunity.

Setting policy for a school district can be difficult task—more difficult than organizing a bake sale or heading up a staff meeting.

Let's hope the candidates can show some insight into the district's future problems, as well as some potential solutions. And let's hope they get out to a few of the next board meetings.

The Flip Side by craig piechura



A tale of squiggles and seats

With only one column under my expanding belt, here I am reflecting on two of the most over-explored topics in existence.

I'm going to explore the mind of an innocent child and then look at the brain of a deranged baseball devotee.

There was a discussion among friends the other day about things everyone has seen or done but no one but a child usually talks about.

To be specific, did you ever blink your eyes and watch little squiggles that look like microscopic organisms float by? Don't look at me funny—you know you have. So what are those little squiggles called?

The closest thing I could find in the dictionary for this everyday optic phenomenon is a phosphene. This is described as a luminous impression caused by "excitation of the retina."

But, as far as I can tell, phosphenes are what you see when you close your eyes and press down on your eyeballs.

Try it. Don't worry, your face won't freeze into that position, contrary to motherly opinion.

What you're seeing are phosphenes, little streaks and balls of vivid colors that can be self-inflicted. However this does not explain or give a name to those germ-like strands that live beneath your eyelid.

It took an inquisitive little kid the other day to get me thinking about this common occurrence. That got me going.

WITHOUT LAPSING into Bill Cosby cuteness, did you ever play perception tricks on yourself when you were lying in bed as a child? I hope you did, because if you didn't this isn't going to make a lot of sense.

A child, or well-adjusted adult, lying in bed on his back, might look up at the ceiling and pretend that the whole house has been turned upside-down. You've got to step up to get over the door frame and walk around the chandelier in the hallway. If the bedroom comes to a peak, you can go sliding down into the valley and maybe fall into the attic you never could reach when the house was right-side-up.

Another more obscure childhood perception game involves lying in bed facing the window, closing your eyes, and imagining that the bed and your feet are facing in the opposite direction. I used to play this game so often I'd hit my head against the wall climbing out of bed.

After more than a few miscalculations, I decided to get into the newspaper business.

These early bursts of cosmic consciousness should be balanced against some of my shortcomings, too. Just I sound like I was a star pupil on the "Mister Wizard" TV show.

I also remember thinking, as a kid, that Europe was located on the other side of the John R. viaduct, China, as I and every other youngster knows, was located deep beneath the sand box. If you dug your way through, you'd end up in the People's Republic where you'd presumably be put to work digging the commune's irrigation ditch.

"SPEAKING OF FINDING one's direction (that's called a clumsy transition in the trade), how about our Detroit Tigers?

Include me in the ranks of the unbridled optimists. But all of this good news doesn't outweigh the devastating effects of a tragic decision made by the Tiger front offices, and its Godfather, the Detroit City Council.

The Great Green Stadium at Michigan and Trumbull isn't all green anymore.

This may not mean much to you insensitive louts out there. But to the true-blue (that's a figure of speech) Tiger fan, the old ball park always was and always should be green. I felt good in this day of Formica and Fiberglas to sip on a beer and look out at the green grass, green seats, green outfield wall and even green screens.

Not anymore, chum. Wooden green seats were auctioned off last fall and replaced during the winter with larger, blue plastic seats.

This time I agree with Free Press columnist Joe Falls. A travesty has been committed and there's a reason for Joe to turn on the tears.

At first I thought if enough people made enough noise, Tiger management might admit their mistake and re-paint the new seats green. This is wishful thinking because they bought the plastic seats so they wouldn't have to keep adding coats of paint year after year. And you can't paint plastic with a brush.

The recent renovation, I'm afraid, will be more than just an assault on the eye. The worst of it is plastic seats don't make the proper flapping noise necessary in late-inning rallies.

Is this time-honored Tiger tradition gone, too? I've become quite militant about the issue and welcome reader's suggestions. I stop just short of taking the approach the Japanese Red Army used against the new Tokyo airport.
 Maybe we could organize people to knit green seat covers.

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He lost the game-winning point

—and the winner is...

Love me tender

Pardon me

Anyone who has peered through the eye of a camera knows that the prints or slides that they pick up at the drug store can include a fuzzy print here or a decapitated relative there.

In other words, we all know that taking good pictures involves a fair amount of luck and that taking award-winning pictures transcends luck and becomes an art.

All this to introduce you to one of our youngest Observer & Eccentric staff members, Gary Friedman, Southfield Eccentric photographer and winner of the "Photographer of the Year" award.

Gary is no stranger to this award bestowed by the National Press Photographers Association. His work was honored in '74, '75 and again this year for pictures taken in '77.

We asked him the traditional newspaper question, "why photography?" figuring he's still young enough at 23 to remember why he chose the field.

"My older brother is a commercial portrait photographer and he gave me a camera. I used to help him at weddings. Then I went to work for my school newspaper when I was 16 and I shot high school basketball games. I was asked to free lance for the Southfield Eccentric and was promoted to part-time staff photographer a short time later and eventually to full-time staff photographer."

This makes Gary the guy with the most seniority around the Southfield office, even though he is the youngest there.

We threw another question at him:
 "What was your most exciting assignment?"

"In 1976 I took a leave of absence for three months because I was chosen to be an intern photographer for the National Geographic. I drew assignments in Washington DC, Toronto, Vermont, and Cincinnati."

The highlight of his three month Geographic stint was recording a desert archaeological dig on film. Subject: Shoshone Indian artifacts.

You're looking at some of Gary's work here. "He missed the game-winning point" and "Pardon me" speak for themselves, but "Love me tender" may need a little explanation.

"The school was enjoying the first winning season in quite awhile and they were killing the other team. The kids were excited. I had my camera trained on the bench and in a split second that picture showed up in my lens. I think it's the best picture I've ever shot."

When you're 23, and have been thrice chosen photographer of the year from four states; Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky, it would seem there is a lifetime of photographs ahead of you. We don't know what Gary's best shot will be a year from now, or in ten years, or twenty, but we do know that we're glad he's here with us now doing what he calls "communicating" with exceptional skill.

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