

editorial opinion



Housing cost spiral panics home buyers

Middle America is playing a dangerous game of Russian roulette. Day by day we pull the trigger and the economic cylinder clicks off another notch. When our bullet, labeled inflated housing prices, slides into place, economic chaos will result. The sad fact is that we are committing ourselves to this economic suicide because we have panicked. Take a look at some of the grisly realities. Persons around the metropolitan Detroit area are buying up houses faster than they can be produced. It's a seller's market, say the real estate dealers. If you don't like the asking price, there is somebody standing behind you who will buy. In 1973, the median price of a home in this area was \$28,000. Today, that same house costs \$55,000. Housing prices have increased 12 per cent annually over the last two years in metro Detroit, according to U.S. Department of Commerce statistics.

IN OAKLAND County, it's worse, with some areas reporting as much as a 25 per cent increase. Homeowners have fooled themselves into believing they are getting a "deal" and are making a sound investment. "Buy now and make some money down the road," so the theory goes. Nonsense. The best a homeowner can do is maybe, just maybe, keep up with inflation. But consternation sets in when the property tax bill arrives and John Q. Citizen has to fork over big bucks for a house he paid \$45,000 but now is valued at \$150,000. We're turning ourselves into "house poor" middle Americans. A larger percentage of our income goes toward paying off the mortgage. We send the wife to work so we can have the multi-garage, multi-bathroom castle in the suburbs. Real estate data shows that 93 per cent of home buyers in this area insist on living in single-family units. No-frill housing gets the nix from most folks. They want the best—even if they really can't afford it. The pathetic truth is that middle America is being manipulated. The flip-side of the coin reveals that strong, sturdy housing a few miles away, in Detroit, is wanted for buyers. While comparable housing in the suburbs is experiencing 12 per cent yearly inflation, housing in Detroit is either going down or increasing at only one or two per cent. But suburban America has fallen prey to fear which has been taken advantage of by the housing industry.

SELL YOUR house in Detroit for half its worth and go into debt in the suburbs. Homeowners must organize and protest this economic swindle. They must refuse to be victims of fear—racial and otherwise. If they don't, the bottom will drop out and even the affluent will find themselves abandoning that dream house. And who wants a boarded-up house in his subdivision, anyway?

Under the rose

Among educated peoples, the term "sub rosa" has come to mean confidential and secret. Its origin is ancient. When secret societies of olden times held meetings to plot something, a rose would be affixed above the door to tell members looking for the meeting site that this was the place. Thus, the secret meeting was held under the rose, or sub rosa. Modern Michigan is less elegant in its language. Until the new open meetings law went into effect this year, sub rosa meetings were called "executive." Now they are called simply "closed" meetings or "caucuses." The open meetings law is less than popular with many local government officials throughout the state. So be it. Whether the meeting is called sub rosa or executive or closed, it is still secrecy in deliberations on matters of public interest. By any terminology, elegant or otherwise, it is wrong.

Super Bowl pitch may score for area

Last year, the State of Michigan gave the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau a grant of \$15,000 to seek out, attract and promote major activities at the Silverdome in Pontiac. The state justified this expense because any major event that takes place at the Silverdome generates thousands of dollars to business activity in southeastern Michigan.

The tourist and convention bureau looked around and decided that the Pro Bowl, the all-star National Football League game in the latter part of January, would be an ideal event to bring to Pontiac. After consulting with the Detroit Lions, it turns out that in the football world the Pro Bowl is a drug on the market.

The home team doesn't particularly like it because it must add an additional ticket to the season ticket package at a cost of \$15, for which it gets nothing but a lot of angry season ticket holders.

THE LAST TWO Pro Bowls have been played in Seattle and Tampa, which happen to be the two new expansion teams in the National Football League. As part of the deal to bring them into the league as expansion teams, they had to agree to hold the Pro Bowl in their stadiums.

So the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau set its sights higher. How about bringing the Super Bowl to metropolitan Detroit?

When word got out, some people laughed. Who would want to come to Detroit in the second or third week of January when they could go where it's warm, where the beaches are white and the sky is blue?

Undaunted, a committee was formed of not only



the tourist and convention people in Oakland County and the Silverdome staff but also people who are keenly interested in helping the area, including the rival Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Why the Super Bowl was so attractive was that a year ago, in Los Angeles where the Super Bowl was held at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, at least \$127 million worth of economic activity in the five days preceding the game was attributable to Super Bowl activities.

Experts figured there would be \$80 million to \$80 million worth of economic activity generated by the Super Bowl in metropolitan Detroit in the middle of January if this was selected as the site. And January certainly is not the best economic month for the area.

THE NEW SUPER Bowl committee trudged off to New York last June to make a presentation to the owners of the National Football League. There are 28 owners, and it takes a vote of 21 to pick the Super Bowl spot.

The Super Bowl committee selected the year 1981 because it wanted to have enough time to use the Super Bowl as an economic development tool for southeastern Michigan.

Why some split couples still live together



"Thank God I have such a large living room. Otherwise, there wouldn't be space for his bed." A fair damsel was saying to a companion as I climbed upon a nearby stool for my daily shake and chill.

Cautiously curious, I eavesdropped deliberately in a private eye manner taught me in days of yore by an editor who long ago went to that great press box in the sky.

It soon became apparent that the object of her non-affection was a husband who had been relegated to stewardship of no more than the cutlery.

Yet it was equally obvious they were continuing to share the same abode. Sans sex, of course. At least that seemed an eavesdropper's reasonable assumption.



How now? said I to myself. Then I made a mental note to ask an attorney or two as to the prevalence of couples who are bent upon divorce going on with their lives under the same roof.

FREDERICK G. BUESSER JR. of Birmingham and Maurice M. Breen of Plymouth became my sources, and from them I learned this is not a legal oddity. More often than not, it stems from economic necessity.

Personally, I find it difficult to believe there can be many joys to such an arrangement when, as you and I both know, even happy marriages have their strained moments.

Buesser is a past president of the State Bar of Michigan and without question he and colleagues in the firm he heads are familiar figures in the legal world's major leagues. Breen is a political force in Plymouth Township where he once was elected supervisor and where he still serves on the board of trustees.

Both agreed that some weird circumstances can result when two people involved in a divorce action go on living at the same address.

For instance, Breen recalled a dispute over refrigerator privileges. The couple had agreed that each would have half the cooler. Then the wife asked the court for an enforcing injunction against her husband when she found he had pilfered a ham from her half.

For such reasons do judges grow old early.

CONTINUING LIFE together, yet apart, obviously is compounded by whether there are children. Whether there is adequate financial strength to absorb another set of expenses should either party move out is another area of difficulty.

Detroit was given 10 votes for 1980 when it didn't even want the event.

The National Football League selects the site two years in advance so the 1981 site should have been selected in June of 1978.

The Super Bowl committee has prepared promotions, has contacted owners and was about to go public in readiness for the June meeting.

At this point, 15 owners would vote to bring Super Bowl to metropolitan Detroit in 1981, and six other votes could be convinced. After all, the Midwest is the home of football; the previous 12 Super Bowls have been played far away from the area of the country that historically supported pro football during the regular season.

THIS WEEK the National Football League announced that selecting the site for the 1981 Super Bowl would not be on the June agenda but rather on the March 1979 agenda. That will shorten the period between site selection and game time to about a year and a half.

An aide to Pete Rozelle, commissioner of the NFL, was heard to say that no city has ever put on such an extensive pitch to get Super Bowl as has metropolitan Detroit.

The Super Bowl committee was all revved up and ready to go to New York in June, and now it must slow down for another eight months. Hopefully, its momentum can be kept at a high pitch during the delay because the rewards to southeastern Michigan in January of 1981 would be so tremendous.

Editor's note: Our columnist is also chairman of the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau.

"Economics, custody of children and the reluctance of one of the partners to have a divorce at all are three of the greatest problems that plague divorce cases," said Buesser who once was said by The Detroit News to have had "legions of famous clients."

Just where does the matter of sex arise when two people who have said "I do" eventually find their marriage is beyond repair, but neither moves out?

Don't forget, it was the comment about having space for a bed in the living room that launched this discussion. We turn now to a highly significant decision by the Michigan Court of Appeals.

IN ONTONAGON COUNTY not long ago, a wife's petition for divorce was denied by a Circuit Court judge on grounds that the parties continued cohabitation after any hope of reconciliation had passed. This constituted condonation (forgiveness), ruled the trial judge. Therefore, divorce was barred.

The Court of Appeals overturned this decision. It said these were among the established facts:

"After plaintiff-wife filed a divorce complaint, the parties continued to reside at the family home and continued periodically to share the matrimonial bed. Even after all hope of reconciliation had passed, there was at least one incident of sexual relation."

It also was established as fact that the husband's excessive drinking and acts of violence had contributed to a breakdown in the relationship, and that there remained no reasonable likelihood the marriage could be preserved.

The Appeals Court held that if of itself condonation is not a legally sufficient ground for denying a divorce under Michigan's no-fault divorce law, the court said the trial judge should have considered the other destructive factors.

"A marriage is based on more than just sex," said the court.

"It (the trial court) may not simply label sexual intercourse condonation and deny divorce on the basis thereof since condonation was a fault defense which no longer exists."

There was more verbiage in the ruling than that, but I am going to leave well enough alone and get off the subject.

My suggestion to anyone involved in any such situation would be to work out your own definition of forgiveness, but restrict it to pots and pans.

Hiawatha learns of Huron's holocaust

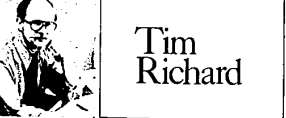
As the sun set along the shore of Gitchee Gumees, the big-sea water, young Hiawatha drew closer to the warm fire in front of the wigwam of his grandmother, Nokomis.

"O Nokomis," the bright-eyed lad began, "tell me of the adventures of our brother tribes here in the lands of the sweet waters."

"Yes, I will tell you a tale," said Nokomis, with a sad look in her eye, "but you must understand, O Hiawatha, that not all stories can be happy. I have a story to tell you that is woefully sad, but you must learn it nonetheless."

The boy frowned a moment, but he was determined to learn wisdom and bade Nokomis go on with the tale.

"THE HURONS were a strong but peaceful tribe, wondrous tillers of the soil, in the lands of the east of us," began the crone Nokomis.



"In numbers they were 30,000; in villages, 20 or more. Though not all were pleased, they began learning the religion of the Black Robes, the Jesuit priests sent by the Great White Father, Champlain."

"The Hurons' enemies were the Iroquois, a fierce nation to the south and east. While the Hurons accounted themselves as brave in battle as the Iroquois, the crafty Iroquois had obtained thundersticks from Dutch traders to the east of them."

Nokomis paused to add sticks to the fire, and Hiawatha shuddered with foreboding as his mind guessed at what would come.

"EARLY IN 1649, by the white man's reckoning," Nokomis went on, "an Iroquois war party, numbering at least 1,000, made its way into the heart of Huron country, near what we today call Georgian Bay."

"As the Hurons of a small village were at mass, war whoops rang out, and in a few minutes the people of the village, old and young alike, were slaughtered. Even the Black Robe was not spared, and his body was tossed into the flames of his church."

"Even the Huron villages with palisades could not withstand the onslaughts of the Iroquois. If they surrendered, the Hurons suffered unspeakable tortures with hot coals, hot rocks and sharp sticks. When the Iroquois' blood lust was satisfied, they tied captive Hurons to stakes in their lodges and set the lodges afire."

"Some captives were taken back to Iroquois towns to be slaves, but many were tomahawked along the way."

"Only a few thousand Hurons survived of the once mighty nation of 30,000, and those survivors were scattered to the winds. Some came here, to Gitchee Gumees, but were driven back by the Sioux. The great Black Robe, Marquette, finally came to minister to those who survived at St. Ignace."

HIAWATHA NOTICED a tear gleaming in old Nokomis' eye. "Do you weep for the dead and suffering?" he asked the crone.

"No," she said, "I lament the ignorance of the living, who will not learn the lessons of unpreparedness and the virtues of human unity."

"Man pays attention to such holocausts only when they happen to his own tribe. But man ignores the holocausts of other tribes; struggling, it happened to them."

"The firelight flickering through my tears gives me a vision. I see many more such holocausts ... in lands called Germany, Nigeria, Ruanda."

"The sad thing is that man learns these lessons only when harm is inflicted on his own tribe. He doesn't learn from the experiences and suffering of other tribes."

"Even the Indians didn't learn," said Nokomis, dropping her head. "They continue to protest against the white man, all the while forgetting that their fellow Indians are their own most blood-thirsty enemies."

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