

editorial opinion



"Hors d'oeuvres" by Lynn Orr

State zings birth control

Michigan hobbled out of the dark ages a few months ago when our wheezing legislators agreed to allow birth control to be taught in public schools.

But the hobble turned into a pratfall a few weeks ago when the State Board of Education released its guidelines for teaching the birds 'n bees fundamentals.

Either university lobbyists or the Bible thumpers got to the state board. Not to be outdone in a rush to conservatism, the state's guidelines made it next to impossible for a district to actually begin teaching the subject.

As one local school administrator put it, "The colleges will be scrambling to develop a degree program in the subject."

In one suburban school district, not one teacher on the staff, including certified health and hygiene instructors, would qualify to teach birth control under the guidelines.

Come on people. This whole subject is getting out of hand. When Michigan eliminated the ban on teaching birth control, Louisiana was left as the sole holdout. Obviously 48 other states have acquired some experience through the years in public school teaching of the subject.

WHY DOES the state board assume we're breaking new ground?

Statistics indicate teenagers are failing to get the correct information on how to prevent pregnancies—or they're disregarding it.

The illegitimacy birth rate jumped to 14 per cent of all births in the U.S. in 1976 according to the latest data released by the National Center for Health Statistics. (It's nice to get this kind of information almost 14 years after '76 expired, but that's another subject.)

The out-of-wedlock births among black women nudged past the 50 per cent mark. Teenage mothers accounted for 50 per cent of all out-of-wedlock births, while women 24 or younger mothered 81 per cent of the total births in the country.

That all says something about getting smarter as we get older, while accentuating the need for pregnancy prevention among youths. Those who believe parents should be responsible for birth con-

trol passing on information just aren't getting the message. Parents abdicate that responsibility.

Of course, knowing about birth control and applying it are two distinct areas. Societal practices take care of that.

THE RESPONSIBLE young man who wants to buy condoms has to ask at the drug store, sheepishly enduring the smirks of some pharmacists.

If consumers can grab dangerous pesticides and razor blades off the shelves in the aisles, why are condoms relegated to behind-the-counter sales?

Even an adult male can feel pretty silly requesting a package of Trojans from a teenage sales clerk.

For women, the situation often goes beyond embarrassment. The most effective contraceptives are available only through physicians which means expensive examinations and fear of parental interference. "Don't try to trick me, young lady," one authoritarian doctor admonished a 26-year-old friend of mine when she requested a birth control prescription a few months before her wedding.

What happens to a teenager who confronts one of the old guard?

More teenagers are availing themselves of services at the Oakland County Health Clinic, where discretion and free advice takes top priority. But it all goes back to knowing about the availability of services in the first place.

If those concerned about teenage sex think it's going to decline when the sexual pendulum swings, they're in for a surprise. Rumble seats did have something in common with 1950's drive-ins, 1960's motels, and 1970's after-school parties.

School administrators, concerned parents, and teenagers themselves are going to have to tackle the issue, or the lifting of the teaching ban will be meaningless. The Lansing educators need a push into the '70s.

If we're concerned about rising laboration rates and welfare money spent on Aid to Dependent Children, we'd better get the birth control message across to young people when they need it. I don't think theoretical taboos on sex relationships are going to do the trick.

They never did.



"Between the lines" by Carl Stoddard

Days of beer and daisies

Last week's column on the pitfalls of beer can collecting drew more than the usual number of responses. Apparently, there's a lot of beer lovers out there.

Some folks marveled at my capacity for beer. I have since tapered off. Others wondered what kind of beer I like best. Cold beer is my favorite. In response to another question, I do not plan to collect half-gallon whiskey bottles.

SPEAKING OF collections, I found quite a collection of things on my desk during my semi-annual desk cleaning last week. Aside from the usual assortment of old notes, bad pens and newspaper clippings, I found a poem.

Don't ask me how the poem ended up on my desk. It was just included in some promotional material from a Southfield recording studio and apparently was intended to soothe the rapid pace of advertising executives.

But we journalists—and I suspect a lot of other people, too—could heed the lessons included in the poem. So I thought I'd pass it along. It's called

"I'd Pick More Daisies" and its written by that well known author, Anonymous.

If I had my life to live over, I'd try to make more mistakes next time. I would relax. I would limber up. I would be slier than I have been this trip. I know of very few things I would take seriously.

I would be crazier. I would be less hygienic. I would take more chances. I would take more trips. I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers, and watch more sunsets. I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans.

I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones. You see, I am one of those people who lives prophylactically and sensibly and sanely, hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I have had my moments and, if I had it to do over again, I'd have more of them.

In fact, I'd have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day.

I have been one of those people who never go anywhere without a thermometer, a raincoat and a parachute. If I had it to do over, I would start barefooted earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would play hooky more. I wouldn't get such good grades except by accident.

I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I'd pick more daisies.

TALKING ABOUT flowers, my brother-in-law John has flowered into a humorist of late. At least I think he's kidding.

He tells me he was born in a basement and never brought up. As a child, he says, he was so dim-witted that the city put a sign outside his house that said "Slow Children."

Now he walks around saying things like "It'll be a nice day if it doesn't rain" and "If things don't change, they're gonna stay the same."

Recently, I asked his opinion of my beer can collection. "I'd rather save the contents," he said.



By W. W. EDGAR

The Stroller

Beefsteaking the payroll

One of the questions most often asked The Stroller as he strolls along the journalistic trail concerns his presence here along the banks of the Rouge in southeastern Michigan.

Having read of his fondness of the Pennsylvania Dutch Country, with all of its traditions and life styles, they ask:

How did you ever come out here?

It is a good question. But they are just as puzzled when The Stroller tells them that he wouldn't be here if Harry Gangware had not run out of cows.

The answer seems to stun them, but Harry Gangware and his cows—or lack of them—played an important part in The Stroller's career in journalism.

THE QUEER TWIST in the life of the young lad from the Dutch Country started more than a half century ago. And it all came about because of a split in the Democratic Party that left it without a daily paper. In those days, politics and newspapers were linked much more closely than they are today.

It so happened that Harry Gangware was a leader in the Democratic Party and the rich, old type of farmer who usually got what he wanted.

With the need for a newspaper and none available, he decided to organize one. This was born the Allentown Record, housed in a residence close to the county courthouse where he was a visitor most every day.

To head the paper, he got his partners in the venture to employ one of the best of the old-time editors who, too, was a staunch Democrat. This old editor accepted the assignment with the stipulation that he would hire his

own staff and that he wanted no one who ever had been inside of a daily newspaper office. He wanted to train his own.

With a smile from Lady Luck, The Stroller was chosen, and the chance to become a newspaperman gave him the long-awaited opportunity to get out of the muck and grease of the machine shops.

The NEW PAPER got off to a good start. It so happened that the Democrats were the majority in that section of Pennsylvania, a state which was normally Republican. But after three years of beating the well-financed opposition, the Allentown Record came upon dark days. It finally ran out of funds. Came one evening when we were told that there would be no pay—maybe for a day or two. But we were asked to continue working.

We did. We all wrote our stories. But we put them on a spike and informed the old editor that we would send the copy to the Linotype when we received our pay.

A hurried call was placed to Mr. Gangware, who was treasurer of the infant paper. He hastened to the office. Looking over the situation and seeing that the paper wasn't going to be printed, he acted swiftly.

He placed a call to one of the large beef suppliers in Lehigh County. Reaching the man he wanted, he sold him enough cows to meet the payroll. The checks were made out and we went to work.

That hurdle crossed, Harry Gangware sat back and hoped the big financial storm was ended. It was. But only temporarily.

Several months later, the crisis

arose again. This time he repeated his remedy. He called the beef supplier again. With the same result. He sold enough cows to meet the payroll.

When he asked another of his Democratic cronies for financial help, one of them, Johnny Fredericks, remarked in front of the editorial staff: "Harry, I am in the candy business. I can't sell my stock. It isn't big enough to meet the payroll."

So Harry had to call the beef houses again.

BY THIS TIME the reporting staff realized that the days of the Allentown Record were numbered. There then began a hunt for new positions.

It so happened that Lady Luck smiled on The Stroller again. As the Allentown Record was sinking, Edgar A. Guest, the lovable poet of the Detroit Free Press, came to Allentown for a stop along the Chautauque circuit, which was equivalent to our Town Hall series of today.

Being a lover of Mr. Guest's poems, The Stroller just couldn't miss the chance to hear him. Following the program, he had the chance to meet the great poet and had an enjoyable chat for more than half an hour.

It wound up with an invitation to join the sports staff of the Free Press and he reported the following Wednesday, Feb. 3, 1924.

On the morning he left home, the rival newspaper carried the story that the Allentown Record had breathed its last.

But if kindly, old Harry Gangware hadn't run out of cows, The Stroller possibly would still be back in the Dutch Country.

Life takes some funny turns.

From our readers

Travel agents defend postal service system

Editor:

Too often I have heard the post office berated for slow delivery when one is impatiently waiting for some envelope or other. However, we would like to take this opportunity to tell the other side.

We are travel agents with the AAA World Travel in Farmington Hills and had two clients departing for the Orient and Indonesia, recently.

We secured their Japanese visa and had them send for the one from Indonesia with a sufficient amount of time for this to be processed.

For some reason, the passports weren't processed until April 11 and upon our frantic calls the embassy

agreed to send them special delivery. When they weren't received by us on the 12th, we made somewhat hysterical calls to the Farmington Post Office and were treated to a show of helpfulness that we have only come to expect from Action Line.

At the close of the business day on the 12th, when it still had not been received, Mr. Fred Bending took all the description information and assured me that Mrs. Nancy Knapp would be on night duty at the Post Office and would call us at home the minute the precious envelope arrived.

Early the next morning, we received the anxiously awaited call from Rosemary Down at the annex on Grand River and Middlebelt.

She had the envelope in hand. It was then delivered to Mrs. Knapp at the downtown Post Office and picked up by us a few minutes later.

Our clients were on their way as scheduled—all because of the concern and helpfulness of people like Mr. Bending, Mrs. Knapp and Mrs. Down.

They deserve our warmest thanks at the very least and perhaps this is done more often than we realize. In the future, we will think twice before we complain about anything about the postal service.

CHRITINE RANDOLPH, KAYE BRITTON
AAA World Travel
Farmington Hills



Daniels Den



EMORY DANIELS

W.C. Fields may have been right

There have been some conclusions I've reached by jumping, but one I didn't jump to is my opinion about dogs.

In earlier columns, I have shared with you my personal convictions that dogs aren't good pets, and that Toby lives at my house only as my extreme sacrifice for the members of my family who want a dog for a pet.

But if I were an uncompromising, unloving, insensitive father, there would be no dog in my household. And if I were God, there would be no dog in my neighborhood.

But being mortal, I must learn to adjust to dogs in the neighborhood.

FREUD PROBABLY would trace my dislike for dogs to Blackie, a cocker spaniel who was my dog during my early boyhood years. Blackie, without warning or explanation, died on me.

His replacement ran in front of a car and got killed. The next replacement kept running into the school playground next door to knock little kids over and had to be replaced by another dog, who also got hit by a car.

But I don't think those replacements have anything to do with my dislike for dogs. The main reason is that dogs slobber and drool all over people. Dogs shed hair, sometimes smelly, peculiar, and will make messes on floors if not let outside on a scheduled basis.

These reasons for disliking dogs have been reinforced by a number of specific incidents in my life relating to dogs, such as the time I was attacked in a junkyard by a German shepherd. A few weeks ago, I wrote in this column about making a fool of myself in public chasing a friend's dog named Jungles.

Now I will give Toby credit for not attacking me and for not running away. In fact, Toby seldom does anything overt to annoy me (he's too stupid).

Actually, I can recall only two times I was annoyed with Toby. The first was when he crawled into my bed and laid his head on the pillow next to mine. I was in the process of waking up, leaned over to kiss my wife good morning, and felt my lips being pressed against a soft, moist, rubbery nose.

I opened my eyes quickly and there was Toby, laying flat on his back. He remained in that position for about two seconds before hitting the floor.

Another time Toby spent the summer jumping through screen windows in a house we just moved into, and that annoyed me. But that adjustment period lasted only 90 days, so Toby survived.

THE REAL PROBLEM is that Toby has spoiled me. I have come to expect other dogs to come when I call them, and I naturally assume other dogs won't bite me in response to a friendly gesture.

Which brings me to another incident regarding me and dogs. Last Saturday morning I was in my backyard digging up dead trees I had planted last year. (That's a ritual—I plant trees in the spring, they die, and I dig them up the following spring.)

While pulling up a dead seedling, I noticed another dog dancing around the backyard playing with Toby. I ignored them until Bobo began to act up. Bobo is a Siberian Husky who is a good dog in most ways, except that he lacks tolerance for other dogs. Three

years ago when we first moved to where we're now living, Bobo jumped the fence and attacked Toby a half dozen times—drawing blood three times.

When Bobo leaped over the side fence and began pacing back and forth along my rear fence, I knew he was getting ready to attack this strange dog in my yard. I put Toby inside and went back to work. If Bobo wants to chew up this strange dog, that's OK by me.

Then my daughter came into the backyard and called out to this strange dog: "Hello, Butchie, what are you doing here?" Butchie? Who's Butchie? Come to find out, Butchie was Frank's dog. And Frank is my neighbor's couple blocks away, and a good neighbor at that. That puts a different perspective on things.

If Bobo wants to chew on a dog, let it happen. But I can't let Bobo chew up Frank's dog. I know nothing about Butchie, but Frank's a nice guy.

So I drop the shovel and start calling for Frank's dog to get him inside my house with Toby. "Come here, Butchie, come here." (What a ridiculous name for a dog!)

Butchie would come running up to me, and then shy away as I reached for his collar. Finally I reached down and grabbed his collar. The moment I did, Butchie half-swallowed my thumb and began chewing on it.

I released the collar and let Butchie run off. I'd rather have Bobo chew up Butchie (Frank or no Frank) than to have Butchie chew on me.

I understand why many people love dogs. Hopefully, you now understand better why my feelings are at the other extreme.

Farmington Observer

"Successor of the Farmington Enterprise"

Steve Barnaby
Editor

22170 West Nine Mile
Southfield MI 48075
(313) 352-5400

John Reddy, General Mgr.

Thomas A. Rliordan, Executive Editor

George J. Hagan, Advertising Director, Fred J. Wright, Circulation Director

A Division of
Suburban Communications Corporation

Philip H. Power
Chairman of the Board
(for News of the Area)

Richard D. Aglian
President
Chief Executive Officer