

editorial opinion

Nazis: Threat or kid stuff?

When you read about it now, it's funny: Tom Sawyer, "the Black Avenger of the Spanish Main"; Huck Finn, "the Red-Handed"; Joe Harper, "the Terror of the Seas."

If we assume Mark Twain's stories of Hannibal, Mo., are semi-autobiographical, the pirates of Jackson's Island were playing games in the late 1840s. This would have been less than 30 years after real pirates were cleaned out of the west Florida cays by United States gunboats.

The pirates whom Tom, Huck and Joe imitated were a bloodthirsty lot. They really did capture ships. They really did kill all the men, children and older women. They really did gang-rape the younger women who didn't take their own lives. It wasn't fiction.

There were people in America in Mark Twain's era who were old enough to remember about the real pirates. We wonder how amused—or frightened—they might have been at the antics of three boys on a raft.

THESE RECOLLECTIONS were stirred by last week's coverage of the Nazi bookstore in northwest Detroit's Brightmoor neighborhood. The Nazis say they are receiving "moral and financial support" from suburban residents. They mean our neighbors. They're getting close to our homes.

When reporter Michael Matuszewski interviewed the local Nazis, he found Mark, Allen and Ken ranged in age from 18 to 25. The German Nazi leaders were older. Mark Twain never reveals the ages of the Black Avenger, the Red-Handed and the Terror of the Seas, but most readers judge them to be about 10-14—still kids, not young adults.

So, what are we to make of these new Nazis? Are they just ignoramuses spouting something they have only read about? Or are they a real menace?

(We recall that an exuberant young Bing Crosby was a member of a light-hearted group called the Young Bolsheviks which had nothing to do with real communism. Angry young legislators are sometimes called Young Turks, a reference perhaps to the holocaust inflicted on the Armenians. Yet no one gets emotionally upset at those political references.)

CERTAINLY, there is solid reason for wise adults to be apprehensive at what might be spawned by today's social conditions in metropolitan Detroit.

There are concerns over school integration. There are concerns about neighborhood integration. There are concerns about crime, chemical addiction and change.

There are especially concerns over inflation. Post World War I's inflation ruined the German middle class, who became fertile soil for Nazi seeds. The U.S. has struggled through a disruptive five years of inflation, though nothing as catastrophic as Germany's.

Are the local Nazis just overgrown kids playing Tom Sawyerish games? Or is this really the first step toward sending millions of Jews, blacks, Christian clergymen, dissidents and journalists to the gas chamber?

We in the newswriting business struggle with such questions. Are the local Nazis glorified streakers seeking attention, indecent political flashers who keep scrapbooks? Or will they go away if we all just ignore them?

If we newsmen are to make a mistake, we prefer to err on the side of reporting too much rather than too little. We doubt the local Nazi group is to be feared—but it won't hurt to keep a watchful eye on them.

Litter lobby's latest

The reason that Michigan voters so overwhelmingly adopted an anti-litter law in 1976 was that the legislature, pressured by what we have called "the litter lobby," was unable to act on bills to control the littering of our environment.

The latest gimmick by the litter lobby is to ask for a two-year delay in enforcement of the law—from Dec. 3, 1978 to Dec. 3, 1980. The litter lobby proposes, instead, the substitution of a "litter tax" on all potential forms of litter—not just beer and soft drink bottles, but also wine and whiskey bottles, cigarettes and take-out foods.

The idea has no merit. The legislature in the past has been unable to act fortuitously. There is no reason to expect a higher degree of statesmanship in the future.

The biggest and most dangerous items of litter have been and continue to be soft drink and beer bottles and cans. The other items which the litter lobby proposes to tax are annoying, but aren't the crux of the problem.

By the litter lobby's estimates, a tax on all potential sources of litter would raise \$63.8 million a year, but only \$28 million of that would come from taxes on pop and beer containers.

We've heard enough—perhaps too much—from the litter lobby. The law Michigan voters approved in 1976 should be allowed to go into effect Dec. 3, as scheduled.

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Once-partisan board faces a vacancy

By law, the Schoolcraft College Board of Trustees is nonpartisan. That's what it says in print.

In practice, the Schoolcraft board has long attracted persons with party affiliations. It has spawned one current member of the Michigan Legislature, State Sen. R. Robert Geake (R-Northville), and a long list of legislative candidates.

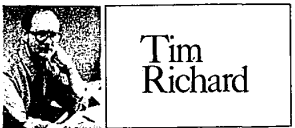
Currently, all eight members of the Schoolcraft board have a party affiliation. Four are Republicans, four Democrats.

It's getting to the point, however, that party affiliation may be irrelevant. Except for electing its own officers, the board almost never splits along party lines any more. Trustees such as Chairman Paul Kadish and Mark McQuesten started their board careers as gung-ho liberals and moderated their views over the years, particularly after dealing with organized labor.

WHAT BRINGS FORTH this recitation of past partisanship is the impending resignation from the board of Ron Cowden, a Republican.

Cowden has been on as principal of Manistee High School, on the shores of Lake Michigan. Unless he turns into a fanatical steelhead and coho fisherman, it is safe to bet Cowden will return to the metropolitan area in a few years, probably as principal of a big high school or even as a superintendent. But I digress.

Cowden's departure at the end of August upsets



Tim Richard

the balance of power, to the extent such a balance is important. A board divided 4:3 must select a replacement to serve until the next election.

The catch is that it will take five votes. Whoever gets the appointment will have to have bipartisan appeal.

Just what will happen is a bit of a mess until the lawyers straighten it out. The terms of three trustees expire in June of 1979—Kadish, Nancie Blatt and Dr. Gerald Cox. But a new state law will take effect then which will reduce Schoolcraft's board to seven members, the same as every other district in the state. So it is worth while even to appoint a replacement to Cowden?

BOARD DEMOCRATS already have their favorite. G.J. (Jack) Bologna of Plymouth Township ran an impressive race in 1977. A lawyer and accountant, Bologna, 49, is president of a management consulting firm and has a record of youth work.

Bologna also has a history of affiliation with liberal Democrats.

Board Treasurer Harry Greenleaf, past chairman of the local (and very efficient) Republican organization, will have a good bit to say about how the appointment is finally decided.

Greenleaf will ask the board "to proceed in a disciplined way" in making an appointment. First, find out who is interested. Then, interview them publicly. The latter step would be unusual in school politics, where deals are usually made outside the board room.

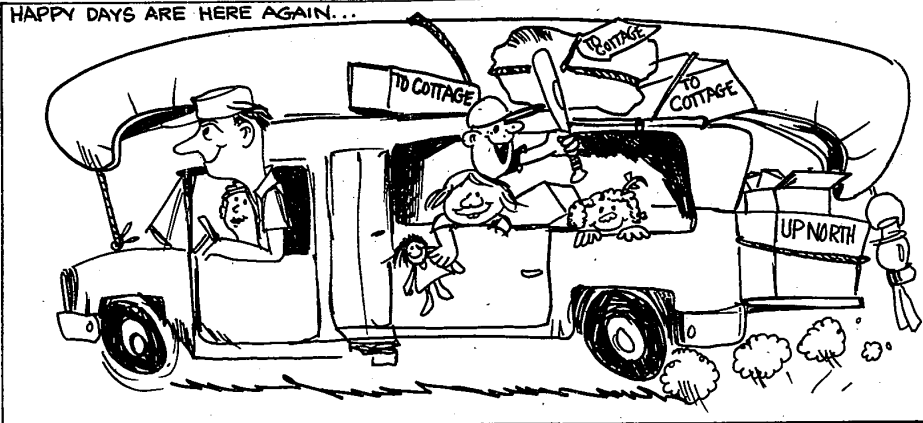
GREENLEAF SEES at least two potential candidates—Bologna and Richard J. Hayward, 49, a Livonia structural steel company executive. Hayward has a record of youth and church work but no partisan affiliation. Absolutely none.

Bologna has run for the board once—in 1977. Hayward has run twice—1975 and 77.

Bologna has a geographical advantage. He is a Plymouth-Canton School District resident, and the Schoolcraft board has six trustees from Livonia, one former Livonian who now lives in Plymouth-Canton, and one from Garden City. Bologna ran well in the Plymouth and Northville districts in 77.

If Bologna is to be appointed, he will need a minimum of one Republican vote. The questions then are: What price—if any—will the Republicans ask? Or is it just possible that Schoolcraft trustees, despite their partisan backgrounds, will really operate in a nonpartisan manner?

Keep reading your hometown paper this summer for further developments.



Three-day weekends take a full week

Remember the old days when holidays were celebrated during the week? Memorial Day was May 31. If it fell on Wednesday, you could take the family out for a picnic, but other than a day on which you didn't go to work, it wasn't a big deal.

Some families took flowers to cemeteries, some towns had parades, but it wasn't treated as a major holiday.

Maybe this was because the South celebrated it on April 25, so it never was a full national holiday.

But now that we are in the era of celebrating national holidays on Mondays, Memorial Day is the first three-day weekend of the warm weather.

Of course, we know there is no such thing as a three-day weekend. Everyone knew that everyone would be going up north for Memorial Day so 1-75 would be very crowded Friday and Monday nights and made plans accordingly.

Starting Wednesday, people started to get itchy. On Thursday, everyone seemed to be at a conference outside the office.

HOW SOON YOU got away depended on where your kids were going to school. Obviously, looking at 1-75 Friday morning, there are a lot of childless couples in metropolitan Detroit.

There seem to be two kinds of people in this world: Regular people and people who have cottages up north.

Regular people have garage sales and sell old washing machines and the like through the want ads. People who have cottages up north save everything all winter in case they can use it up north. They start off reserving a small corner in the basement, and if Memorial weekend didn't come once a year, the mound would overcome their houses.

With the new down-sized cars, it's pretty difficult to move the family up north, much less your winter treasures. More than one-third of the vehicles on the 1-75 parking lot were motor homes, vans or pickup trucks.

The few cars you saw were hauling U-hauls, trailers or rowboats loaded to the gunnels.



by HANK HOGAN

IF THESE PEOPLE thought about it, they probably could have left much of the stuff they were lugging up north back there last Labor Day and saved a lot of trouble. But there is always the



By W.W. EDGAR

The Stroller

Non-graduate confesses

chance you may want to use your boat in the winter.

In the maze of traffic heading north, people looked happy. It was a very long winter, and the travellers were like a flower busting out in full bloom. It was a family outing.

The problem with a three-day holiday is that it takes at least that long to get back to the swing of work.

But if you think a three-day weekend takes a week out of productivity, the Fourth of July falls on a Tuesday this year—which means we'll all have a four-day weekend.

We're planning already.

When he really became glad he never graduated from high school was some years ago on a visit back to the Pennsylvania Dutch Country and the little town of Catasauqua, where he attended school.

On his arrival, he had fond hopes of seeing many of the group from his grammar school days. He thought he might get a chance to chat with Helen Horn, Naomi Williams, Florence Rowland and Mamie Weaver. Or maybe he could visit with George Frederick, Eddie Sandbrook, Eddie Schwepfinger, "Razor" Phaler and some of the lads who were his teammates on the old-time Majestic football team.

To his dismay, he learned many of them had left town in search of work. Others moved with their families to greener pastures. And many of the girls had married and started families of their own.

THEN, ONE MORNING he accompanied his mother down Front Street to the market. He was sure he would see some of the "old gang" and at the same time help his mother with her shopping.

As we walked along, Mother tugged at his arm and said, "You ought to remember that woman up front." She pointed to a woman wobbling ahead of us, and what a sight she was! The woman was built along the same lines as a C&O freight car, when she turned around, she looked like five cents worth of Oh My God. Mother laughed and said, "That's the little blond girl you thought you couldn't live without when you went to school."

Sure enough. That's who it was. And the memory of that sight is one of the reasons The Stroller is glad he never graduated from high school. He likes to remember the cute little things he was with in his grammar school days.