

editorial opinion

Crackerbarrel DEBATE



Political alliances shifting

The resignation of Merv Ross from the Farmington school board represents the end of an era in Farmington area politics.

I've been bouncing around this community, on and off, for the last six years and the most noticeable change has been the gradual transformation of the political climate.

Merv's public career parallels that metamorphosis.

Public attitudes are changing in this area and so are community leaders.

A political observer has to be very careful in analyzing this change to avoid the danger of being prematurely harsh on the new leadership before it has fully blossomed.

But risking this danger, I will make a few observations that are cogent to this time.

In past years an unusual, but very healthy, political alliance was forged between the more pre-dominant conservative activists and the lesser-populated ranks of the liberals in the community.

UNDER THIS alliance, candidates of many political flavors were elected to office with the aid of their philosophical opposites.

A liberal Gary Lichtman was elected to the school board in the same community where his more conservative sibling, Fred, was elected to the city council. A super conservative Joan Dudley easily supported the aspirations of a more liberal Joanne Smith. Merv Ross could sit on the same school board with Ken Perrin.

An 18-year-old high school graduate could be elected as a school board trustee.

The most fruitful results of this coalition was the charter commission which drew up the working philosophy of Farmington Hills, transforming it from a township.

Persons with such divergent philosophies as Dick Frankel, Bob McConnell, Fred Fairfield, Fred Lichtman and Dudley could sit down week after week and hammer out a document that reflected the many views which made up the thinking of Farmington's residents. And even though they disagreed on many issues, they worked together for the same end—a better community in which to live.

Today, many of these names have faded from public view. The coalition which benefited this community so deeply is all but dissipated. Some of these persons have left the community, others simply have chosen to withdraw from public life.

The air of cooperation among persons of different minds has been replaced by more rigid views of persons who recoil from compromise.

Social and political polarization have set in and this community is suffering because of it. And that's a shame.

The universal bug

Deer are found in every county of Michigan. The graceful herbivore has only one rival when it comes to be universal in its range, and that rival is the mosquito.

The mosquito has to rank with the neutron bomb in its devastating effect on human activity. No more horrid curse could be put on an enemy than to wish him plagued by a swarm of buzzing, biting, blinding mosquitoes.

We used to wonder what mosquitoes ate when they were in the wilds with no humans to feed on. The answers are the nectar of the plants and other animals.

No mosquito repellent works perfectly, although the dense fumes of a cigar are as good as anything. Keeping cool and calm amidst a horde of mosquitoes will reduce the number of bites you get.

Around home, get rid of any water-collecting junk in your yard—old tires, tin cans, appliances. Repair leaky pipes and outside faucets. Change the water in bird baths and your child's wading pool at least once a week. Keep your eave troughs clean. Any kind of puddle of water will become a breeding ground for the hateful things.



Concerts under the stars in parks throughout the area bring scenes like these throughout the summer months. (Staff photos by Gary Caskey)

Park concerts are fun for all

We're off to hear the music. We'll steal a page right out of Americana and go to the town park for a concert under the stars. It'll be just like the old days when every Thursday night, just at that tick when the next tock brought dusk, townsfolk where I lived went down to hear Billy Schuchert, Paul Wenglarski and the rest of the Round Oak Band, interrupted only by the steam whistles of the Chicago-bound Michigan Central trains.

You always could count on Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" as the finale. If there's a difference, it's only that Clyde Barber sold his popcorn for a nickel a bag in those days. Ingredients for your thermos remain as always.

IN TODAY'S SUBURBIA, nights of the week for such under-the-stars entertainment differ according to locality.

But whether it's Kellogg Park in Plymouth, Jaycee Park in Troy, Shain Park in Birmingham, the Northland or Prudential sites in Southfield, Civic Center in Livonia, Garden City Park, or the more elite Meadow Brook near Rochester where the Jim Fitzgerald types frequent, an old-fashioned heartbeat of your nation is there to be felt.

Ernie Jones, Bill Revelli, Leonard Smith, George Cavender and even that worthy Spartan, Leonard Falcone, all of whom are maestros of note, often are with us as guest conductors.

But the real work is done in the trenches, as always. It's done in the countless rehearsals, stemming from a sense of personal joy in keeping one's musicianship alive. Rarely—damn rarely—is there a buck to be made from these sumer-time municipal entertainment programs.

THIS WEEK, and I'm not sure my information is complete, our O&E area has been, or is being, treated to this schedule:

TROY: Monday it was the Oakland University Jazz Ensemble. Next will be the Kings of Dixieland, July 10.

LIVONIA: Concert tonight (Thursday) by Warney Ruhl and his orchestra.

BIRMINGHAM: Concert tonight (Thursday) by the Detroit Concert Band under the baton of Leonard Smith, without doubt one of the highlights of the 16-week Birmingham Shain Park series.

NORTHLAND TERRACE ON-THE MALL: Last night the entertainment was by Jimmy Wilkins' band plus the Five Arts Quintet. Panchito is booked for July 5.

PRUDENTIAL TOWN CENTER, SOUTHFIELD: Opener July 9 will feature the Jimmy Wilkins orchestra.

MEADOW BROOK: Concert tonight (Thursday). Vladimir Ashkenazy will be guest pianist and guest conductor with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Theme will be Mozart.

GARDEN CITY: In an area which allegedly prefers galoshes to parasols and likes its music strident, the Metro-West Big Band, which presented its first open-air dance program earlier in the summer, will be back Aug. 25. (Ah, if only one could go back to Eastwood Gardens... or even Paw Paw Lake!)

PLYMOUTH: Kellogg Park, where it never rains on Thursday night, will be the focal point this evening as the 1978 summer series of the



Plymouth Community Band opens. This is getting close to the band's 20th year, most under Jim Griffith. Tonight, Robert Burr takes over, and he alone as a Leonard Bernstein JG is worth your attendance.

FINANCING PATTERNS of these summer programs vary. Meadow Brook depends upon box office sustenance out of budget necessity, but with a relatively reasonable price tag on tickets.

In Troy, the Parks and Recreation Department and the Pontiac Federation of Musicians are splitting the costs 50-50. Livonia's tab is divided between parks and recreation and the arts commission.

Birmingham's city government has appropriated \$5,000 for its Shain Park series, which won't pay the full shot by any means. Civic groups and volunteers like Harris Machus et al will dig for the rest, even if it's from their own lefts to rights.

I hate to say it, but I guess the poor kid on the block is my own Plymouth, a real pass-the-hatter.

Many have tried to get the band's financing off the ground, Griffith, Jim Jabara, Ned Stilton, Jim McKeon, George Lawton, Clyde Nichols, band members themselves with their Podium Club, and others. It's strange, though; never the businessmen.

Money aside, if you ever saw Meredith Willson's "Music Man," or if your memory goes back a "fer piece," then drop in on your own "River City."

The course can be righted

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. It included the phrase, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..." On March 1, 1789, the Constitution of the United States was declared to be in effect, since nine states had ratified it.

If you read the original Constitution carefully, you will find it was a document which gave little power to the common man.

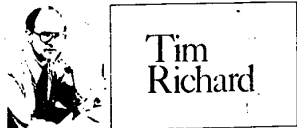
The government was separated into three branches: the judicial, the executive and the legislative.

The Constitution provided that the federal judiciary be appointed by the executive branch.

It provided that the chief executive be elected by what is now called the Electoral College, which could be appointed (not elected) in such manner as the states' legislatures wished to direct. The Constitution also provided that in selecting the legislative branch, the U.S. senators were to be chosen by the state legislatures, and the members of the House of Representatives elected by the people.

All of which means that if all men are created equal, the framers of the Constitution were not convinced that the equal man was very trustworthy.

They permitted the people to elect only the members of the House of Representatives, which could be checked by the U.S. Senate, or checked by the executive branch through veto, or interpreted by an appointed judiciary. America has been looked upon as a model of democracy, with the Constitution its foundation.



Tim Richard

Tax limitation not a new idea

You will find yourself joining in a standing ovation for what these dedicated men and women are bringing into your life.

Item from a conversation with some bulldozers: There was considerable snarling and gnashing of teeth at the stiff increases in building permit costs in recent years. The theory seems to be that cities and townships are afraid to (or can't) raise taxes, so they impose ever higher fees for additional revenue.

Item from a late 1977 Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority (HCMA) handout: The park entry fees of \$1 a day and \$5 a season will be collected Jan. 1 until Dec. 31 at such popular parks as Kensington and Stony Creek. The fees used to be collected from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

They were instituted, if memory serves, after the failure of a 1972 millage request.

Item from the state Department of Natural Resources: Four state forest campgrounds collect fees for camping. The fee is \$2 a night through Sept. 4. Last year the fee was \$1.50 a night.

Item from a recent Schoolcraft College board meeting: Registration fees are being contemplated. The board may decide to charge each in-district student \$5 to register for the fall and winter semesters. One trustee denounces the fees as a hidden tuition increase.

Item from the metropolitan news: Admission to the Detroit Institute of Arts (which is actually supported by the State of Michigan, not the City of Detroit) is still free, but for the last few years you've been asked to make a "suggested contribution." There is a fee for special exhibits.

Another item from the metropolitan news: Admission fees to the Detroit Zoo have been instituted in recent years and are edging upward.

GET THE PICTURE? Tax limitation is already in effect, even without the tax limitation amendment heading for the fall ballot.

The state hasn't raised the income tax rate for several years and has actually reduced the sales tax base. HCMA was shot down at the polls when it tried for new money. Detroit has long been at the limits of its tax resources and today is a favorite charity of the state and federal governments. Schoolcraft College has been mowed down three times during the '70s when it sought tax increases. Many of our cities are nearing their charter tax limits. Our townships have eaten up their allocated millages and must go to the voters any time they want to do anything.

Governments' response has been to dig out a magnifying glass and sharp pencil and look at the segments of the budget called "fees."

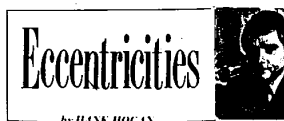
Fees aren't technically taxes. They're much like the admission fees a movie theater charges. Fees are charged for proprietary, business-type functions. The taxpayer still underwrites the program, but government makes some attempt to charge the user.

I AM NOT predicting a great increase in fees if tax limitation passes. I am saying the movement started about five years ago.

It's easy to blurt out, "Let those who use the services pay for them." But after you've blurted it out, think about it. The whole idea of government is to do things for the common good and pay for them out of a common pot.

Time was when there were no public fire departments; you paid a private company. There were no public schools; you paid your kids' tuition or didn't send them. There were no parks other than the town square. There was no access to a library unless you personally paid for it, no access to art unless you personally paid for it, no access to animals unless you could travel to Africa yourself.

We seem to be recreating those good-of-days with our ever-increasing fees.



by HANK HOGAN

Fortunately, over the years, through amendment and liberal interpretation by the judiciary, it has become a living document, correcting what the founding fathers did not necessarily believe—that power should be in the people and not in a select group of political officeholders.

In 1913, the Constitution was amended to provide for direct popular vote of the U.S. Senate, but the federal judiciary is still appointed and the president is still elected by the artificial body called the Electoral College.

This somewhat reflects the wishes of the people, since the Electoral College delegates are elected as a slate by the people, rather than appointed by the state legislatures.

But we still have a long way to go to be the democracy we think we are.

We must provide for direct election of the president, and we must somehow get the American people to want to use their Constitutional right to influence government by getting out to vote.

I have heard an awful lot of people who are critical of the direction in which our ship of state is drifting, and that ship will continue to drift until the American people make their voices heard to change its course.

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