

Pool dispute goes deeper than health, safety

The Benzos Corp., which owns the Muirwoods Apartments complex in Farmington Hills, is only reflecting society's attitudes when it attempts to restrict small children's use of the Muirwoods' swimming pool.

The Muirwoods pool has become the center of controversy recently. Last Friday, an Oakland County Circuit Court judge ruled that Muirwoods' management could no longer evict residents' children from the pool if the youngsters are between the ages of four and 16, and swim with adult supervision.

Muirwoods had been putting the pool off limits to the tykes at certain times, citing health and safety reasons. The pool has no lifeguard, and the children might add human wastes to the chlorinated water.

But then two Muirwoods couples, who were threatened with eviction because they allowed

their small children in the pool, filed a complaint with the Michigan Civil Rights Department, and the case ended up in circuit court.

Still to be decided is whether children under the age of four may use the pool. The judge didn't rule on that, and one of the complaining couples has a 13-month-old boy.

But Muirwoods can't hide behind their health and safety arguments. The YMCA routinely conducts learn-to-swim classes in pools for toddlers, who aren't necessarily toilet trained, and no one

brings up the health issue. And no responsible parents would allow their small children to swim unattended.

THE PROBLEM is a lot more complex than potty in the pool or potential danger from drowning.

A lot of people — including some who pay high rents in fancy suburban apartment complexes with swimming pools — would like to create what they think is a perfect society. That society would be,

among other things, safe, white, middle aged and upper class.

Well, they should realize that they can't regulate society. Especially now.

Like other minorities, children are receiving more and more protection under the law. One of the biggest civil rights issues today is the rights of children. And children are a minority in Farmington Hills generally, and in the Muirwoods Apartments complex specifically.

There is a declining child population in Farmington Hills for a number of reasons, chief among them is the fact that the land is covered with apartment complexes, which ban or limit the activities of children.

Discrimination doesn't have to be based on race or sex. Discrimination happens when you are in the minority.

THOMAS BAER

editorial opinion

Check the scales before singing tax ceiling chorus

As I was saying: We almost have tax limitation in Michigan already. Ask the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, the folks who bring you Stony Creek and Kensington metroparks and all the rest.

Several elections ago, HCMA went after a property tax increase, a modest quarter of a mill. The voters said no. So be it.

The first result was that HCMA began charging \$1 a car for admission or \$5 a season.

The second result was that it began making deals to get capital for future development and expansion. One of those deals incurred the wrath of no less a headline-seeker than Atty. Gen. Frank Kelley.

WHAT HAPPENED is this:

HCMA leased 120 acres of Kensington Metropark to a private company, the Kensington Children's Farm and Village Corp., in 1975. The firm's general manager is Peter Cristiano Jr. of Southfield.

Part of the deal is that HCMA gets 10 per cent of the annual revenue or a minimum of \$25,000 annually. At the end of 25 years, the children's farm, village and rides become HCMA property.

There is ample precedent for this kind of deal in the parks and recreation business. Private enterprises operate in many of our state parks and in such national parks as Grand Canyon.

Dave Laidlaw and the astute business minds on HCMA say the business-government deal is a low-cost, low-risk way to raise capital.

ALL IS FAR from sweetness and light, however. First, neighbors objected to the toot-toot of an old-time train.

Next, Michigan United Conservation Clubs charged HCMA is trying to commercialize the metropark.

And, last week, Frank Kelley went to Oakland Circuit Court, challenging the five-county authority's legal power to go on with such developments. In some colorful press release language, Kelley attacked "carnival-type, mechanical rides" as "totally inappropriate" and "glaringly out of place" in a park.

HCMA's friends say Kelley's purple prose is unjustified; that there may be racial motives underlying neighbors' objections; that the rides will be enclosed; and so on.

MY PURPOSE is not to take sides between the Development vs. the Back to Nature crowd. Rather, it is to point out how government responds when faced with tax limitation.

It looks for non-tax revenue.

It looks at park entrance fees; it looks at concessions; it looks at tuitions and lab fees and registration fees and enrollment fees; it looks at building permit fees.

One-eyed devil

The devil doesn't have a local bank account. Television networks do.

That may be why the mother whose nine-year-old daughter was raped sought \$11 million in damages from NBC. The mother charged the girl's attackers were incited by a TV movie called "Born Innocent."

Wisely, California Superior Court Judge Robert Dossee threw the case out of court.

At one time, a person who committed a felony might say, "The devil made me do it." But no one we know claims to have seen the devil, so it's tough to shift the blame to someone you can't see. It's also tough to sue the devil.

Recall the Florida murder trial of Ronnie Zamora, whose defense attorney claimed a "Kojak" episode prompted the kid to dispose of an elderly neighbor lady. You can't put the finger on the devil, so you put it on TV. A nice rationalization—but the jury didn't buy it, fortunately.

While we join the chorus of folks who insist a lot of TV is junk, we part company when they contend the boob tube is an incarnate demon which should be required to pay damages when someone commits a heinous crime.

It's part of the sue-the-bastards mentality of American life. It ought to stop.



Tim Richard

The corollary is a lesson in who gets government money when it's scarce.

People who file lawsuits get money. The courts mandate money for new jails and prisons. The courts mandate hundreds of millions for new wastewater treatment systems. The courts mandate millions for mental health facilities.

The courts don't mandate money for preserving our woods and waters in a natural state. So what we have is HCMA raising capital by cutting a deal with a privately owned firm to develop a village and model farm in the vintage of the early 1800s, when there really was a little town of Kensington with a wildcat bank.

Make up your own mind whether tax limitation is wise. But if you think it is smart, then consider whether you will like 1) paying fees for more and more government services and 2) seeing government make children's zoo and village deals in order to raise development money.

There are more ramifications to this tax limitation business than meet the eye.

Slip-slidin' away, earthquake-style

through bifocals



of his life. His three partners stood as statues. He took the clubhouse back ever so slowly, the blade squared truly to the yawning, inviting cup. Then he began its advance.

So help me, at that very moment the rocks of the San Andreas Fault also began to advance and that damn ball never yet has gone into the cup.

Out there, you blame this on nature, buy your round of drinks at the clubhouse bar and come back to play the next day, only mildly concerned over the damage caused by just one more earthquake.

ALL OF THESE THINGS, and many more recollections of oddball earthquake experiences from my years on the coast, came to mind this week after reading of the jolt that shook the gorgeous

community of Santa Barbara.

Here, we complained of the heat and humidity. But at least we weren't thrown out of bed during a deep sleep by a quirk in the surface of the earth.

As hot as it has been, at our house we've proceeded with unpacking after moving from one abode to another. The bright side was in finding some unnoticed mail which tells us we soon will fall into unheard of riches.

One envelope shouted, "\$50,000 Super Prize Jackpot." Another offered the alternative of cash or a week in Hawaii for two. Then there was one which said, "Double Giveaways—\$75,000."

For laughs we sent in the "Big Top \$50,000 Giant Jackpot" entry for the cash that can be used as gratuities for the hired hands.

There also was discovery of an autographed picture which many a football fan would treasure.

Tom Harmon's tribute and autograph were in the right upper corner. At the left, in a row of three, is Bullet Bill Dudley, who also added a few words.

The man in the middle of this shot taken years ago in the catacombs of the Los Angeles Coliseum after a game between the Detroit Lions and L.A. Rams was the only guy who ever served as press agent for both of these All-American halfbacks. To this day, I haven't found that third fellow to sign his own name.

The family grows and grows

While Shakespeare has his stages of man, I've found that there are three stages of bringing up children.

They are: Babysitting, Can I Sleep Over?, and Together-Togetherness.

While the children were young it was always a question of do we get a sitter or drag the kids along to some function that they wouldn't enjoy and, after a few minutes, saw to it that we didn't enjoy.

Then they became early teens and disappeared. Every night it was, "Can I sleep over at Ellie's, Kathy's or Bob's?" On weekends we exchanged notes tacked to a bulletin board.

Then came the era of the automobile and we thought we'd have to use telegrams instead of notes.

But all of a sudden our children are back home—well, not exactly back home, but back cottage up north.

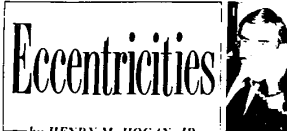
And not only are they back at the cottage, but they are with friends. Hungry friends.

We're fortunate, or rather the kids are fortunate, that we have one of those big, almost 100-year-old houses that sleeps millions.

On Friday and Saturday nights all the beds are full.

Mr. Edwards, who runs the IGA down the street, loves it. He winters in Palm Beach.

Mr. Hooker, who runs the local laundry, had to put an extra truck on because he usually only delivers the clean sheets weekly and it wasn't often enough.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

I had never realized how many close friends my kids had or else it must really be a hot summer in Detroit.

The other Friday morning it was 7:30, the phone rang and I was closest to it.

A small voice said, "Mr. Hogan, this is Margie, I used to go to school with your daughter Kathy at Brookside and she said anytime I wanted to come up and see her in Charlevoix to come ahead. I thought maybe this would be a good weekend."

Now Kathy is in college and Brookside is a grammar school so you know when they last saw each other.

Apparently we're great chaperones because parents call us and say what a wonderful time their kids have had at our place. Sometimes the parents ask when their children are visiting and I have to call them to describe their kids and what their favorite sport is so I have some idea where to look.

It's wonderful to see the kids again, but we wish their schedule would start earlier in the day and end earlier in the evening.

That way we could get the dishwasher started before we went to bed.

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