

editorial opinion

The Flip Side by craig piechura



One more man is mad at Al Ackerman, except this time Al's not glad about it.

The acerbic sportscaster is really bugged about the way his name's being kicked around by John Veach, a self-described "sports nut" who only watches public television when there's an auction on. The rest of the show tends to be too intellectual, he says.

Veach bid for and bought "A Day With Al Ackerman" three years ago during Channel 56's annual auction. He paid \$130 for a lunch, a tour of the broadcast studios and a Detroit Tiger baseball game where he and his nephew, Jeff, would be Ackerman's guests.

What Veach didn't know at the time was that he would end up being offered a dream date in 1978 with Seymour Kapetansky, Channel 4's off-air assignment editor after being left stranded in the loss by Al Ackerman. Veach cried "foul" and filed consumer fraud charges against Al in Macomb County.

LIKE ANY good sports rhubarb, there are two sides to the dispute between Ackerman and Veach.

Ackerman calls Veach "a strange man, whom I've never met."

Veach says of Ackerman: "Hey, I used to like him, my nephew was crazy about him. But for three years now he's been putting me off, putting me off. No way I'd go out with the man now. It's too late for him to offer now. If it came down to losing my \$130 (or meeting Ackerman), I still wouldn't go."

Veach says Ackerman cancelled dozens of appointments or told him to call back later. Ackerman, who is now with Channel 7, maintains that Veach called him less than a half dozen times in the past three years, usually when he was on deadline. Two dates suggested by Veach this year were impossible to honor, said Ackerman.

"The last time I heard from him he wanted to go to the Milwaukee series. It turned out I couldn't make it," said Ackerman. "I had some friends over for the weekend."



AL ACKERMAN

Because Veach has an unlisted telephone number, Ackerman said he waited until his ex-fan phoned back and told him that they'd have to schedule the celebrity date some other time this season.

"If you read the contract, there's no time limit on honoring these things," Ackerman said. "I think I heard from him once the first year and I can't recall him calling to set up an appointment at all last year."

After the last no-show, Veach paid his case to Susan Fries of the Macomb Daily, and the consumer fraud division of Macomb County. The Macomb Daily wrote two front-page articles on it and an editorial entitled "Al Strikes Out." All three articles were aimed right at Ackerman's head. "Nobody's going to feed off me," Ackerman said in response to the criticism.

After reading the articles, television executives at Channel 4 directed Seymour Kapetansky, assignment editor, to call Veach and tell him that Joe Pellegrino, nice sportscaster, would take Veach and his nephew out to the ballgame.

The day after Pellegrino was picked

to make reparations to Veach, the station owners opted not to pick up Pellegrino's option. It looked like Veach and his nephew would be going to the game with a lame duck sportscaster.

THE RIVAL station's offer to come to the aid of Veach further enraged Ackerman.

"As ruthless as I appear to be on TV, I'd at least have the decency to call the other guy when someone made such a serious claim against him," Ackerman said of Pellegrino.

"They got this guy Pellegrino to ride in like Sir Galahad on a big, white horse."

But on Friday, the day before Veach was supposed to attend the game as Channel 4's guest, he called in to cancel. He was upset that he would not be sitting in the broadcast booth or the press box. He'd been invited to watch the game with Channel 4's Kapetansky and his wife.

"Besides, I don't feel Channel 4 should be forced to make good for Channel 7," said Veach.

SO WHERE does this strange saga go from here.

Ed Bobbe, director of the consumer fraud division of Macomb County, says he'll attempt to get Veach his \$130 back.

"But I don't know why anyone would pay for 'A Day With Al Ackerman' anyway," Bobbe said. "You see him on TV and he's a real lemon puss." Ackerman and his attorney, Henry Baskin, say they're perfectly willing to refund the money, if only to stop the character assassination.

Veach says he'll be glad to get the money back as long as he doesn't have to meet Ackerman.

Honey Friedman, who's in charge of Channel 56's annual public television auction, said she'll be in contact with both parties to see if some kind of settlement can be arranged.

And, as for me, I'm going to the Tiger baseball game Saturday. Maybe I'll get lucky and get to meet an unsung celebrity like Seymour Kapetansky.



Hors d'oeuvres by Lynn Orr

Is a moustache a must?

Women look at faces and men look at bodies. So said an article in "Psychology Today" last month.

Well, our office reportorial team decided to take that one step further. From our admittedly cursory investigation, we've discovered that, on the feminine side at least, women run true to type.

That is, they may look at faces first merely because the body is already there. Some of us fail to see men as romantic figures unless they already fit a preconceived body style.

Others don't look much at bodies simply because if the personality doesn't fit a type, the body can take a walk away.

Mostly what we've discovered is that personality plays a bigger role in the selection of companions for women than it appears to play for men.

This profound conclusion was reached after months of listening to men in the office. A woman's personality rarely is interjected into the conversation around here. It's much more likely that her legs, eyes, etc. consume the discussion of any female type unfortunate enough to wander into this office.

THE PERSONALITY of a woman is like eating a hot dog at a baseball game. It's a nice addition to the main event, but if it's not there, the game still goes on.

Not so for most women, although things may be changing a tad. Take the pin-up in our washroom reserved for females.

On second thought, don't take it. This guy in a "Francy Pants" ad, wearing skimpy skivvies,

may be a newspaper clipping, but it's all we've got. Some anonymous member of the office staff taped this little 2x4-inch ad on the wall a few weeks ago. Breaks to the washroom have picked up ever since.

This guy has incredible shoulders, wavy hair, and legs that belong on a lounging lazy leopard. If he could only type, the women would chip in for a salary.

But our clipping is an aberration. When it comes to flesh and blood stuff, personality still ranks up there ahead of physique.

BUT GETTING back to types. At least two of us noticed in an unfortunately brief run-down of the men in our lives that eyelash for eyelash, we've been dating variations of the same man since the age of 16. We differ in only one area.

Personality is a constant for my co-worker. I've got a thing for moustaches.

We could say we're in a rut, but at the same time, there's something very comforting in getting a handle on the future.

I'm looking forward to playing bridge with a gray moustache after retirement. My co-worker knows she'll be listening to rock and roll records in her rocking chair and running out for hamburgers at 2 a.m.

We're not saying the faces will be the same, but we're betting the types will be there. And like sleek silicone bodies, moustaches and dry humour improve with age.



"Around the edge" by Jackie Klein

Teens are just too much

"Today's teens have no respect for their elders. They dress like bums and their music is just noise."

If you're a teenager, please don't tear up this column. If you're a parent, don't agree with me. I didn't originate that putdown. My 18-year-old daughter read it aloud in "National Lampoon."

On the cover, a harassed mother and father are dressed like the last of the hippie flower children. The daughter is wearing a Columbia University T-shirt, a leather jacket, gym shorts, knee socks and clumpy sandals. Time and styles do change.

My daughter resembles the girl on the cover except Lisa wears a University of Michigan T-shirt and red high-top gym shoes with green laces. How well I remember the controversy over "Catcher in the Rye" when Lisa was in high school. Now she's reading "National Lampoon" which makes "Catcher" and even "Studs Lonigan" seem like the "Bobby Twins."

I will now quote some of the less offensive material in this off-the-wall magazine for Lisa, who never finishes anything she reads, and for other teenagers and their long-suffering parents:

"DO YOU HAVE a teenager around the house? Are there teens in your neighborhood or at your place of work? Then why not post this helpful article where they'll see it—pinned to their pillows or taped to the refrigerator door.

"If you're under 16, you'll probably be released in the custody of your parents even if you kill somebody."

"Your parents will eventually forgive you no matter what you did, and you can live at home for free forever."

"You do not have a mysterious, fatal disease which nobody is telling you about even though they all know."

"The entire world is not a dream and you aren't just imagining all this, so get back outside and finish mowing the lawn."

"The real pretty girl you're hung up on will get fat and the handsome guy you dig will bald fast, so don't sweat it."

"If your body can't stand the punishment of drugs, all you'll be able to do is drink like your parents."

"The best advice we can give is don't have kids."

Teenagers write weird letters to the magazine (or maybe the editor makes them up). Here are some samples:

"Would you guys have any idea how I can make money off of Star Wars? After Star Wars Five-Day Decodent Pads, I came up empty."

"WE'D LIKE to take this opportunity to thank everybody who was in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. It's a wonderful thing to see how the movement solved all this nation's racial problems. Nobody even notices anyone's skin color any more. Now that we're all equal, why don't you stop around and have a cup of coffee sometime? Thank you—The American Negro, USA."

I especially liked the description of a teenage girl. She's between a plump baby and the flabby wife, between the childish blabbermouth and the matronly nag and between the tattling sister and the punishing mom.

She's Venus in Cleopatra, Mona Lisa on a diet pill jag, faith with a rich dad and charity with an American Express card. Teenage girls can be found practically anywhere as long as their parents think they're spending the night at a girl friend's.

Teenage girls love buying new clothes, going to Bermuda, telling

their friends they went to Bermuda, private phone listings and, hopefully, their parents.

Teenage girls like Lisa can brighten your life, break your heart and bust your bank account. They're up and down, sparkly and surly and they play tapes with high-pitched sounds. But they're more fun than anyone.

Lisa doesn't go for this corny bit. Her favorite thing in the magazine was "101 things to do when you don't have anything else in the world to do with yourself at all."

I WON'T LIST all 101. Here are Lisa's favorites:

- Plan a birthday party for someone you've never met.
- Give your dog a permanent.
- Find a shortcut way to mope.
- Make a list of all the things you've forgotten.
- Memorize "Little Women."
- Learn to pronounce your boyfriend's name backwards.
- Call information and ask for your own number to make sure it's listed correctly.

Before Lisa grabs the magazine out of my hands, I'd like to share with you the article, "What Are You Going To Do With Your Life?"

One boy said he plans to live off his parents. Another said he's going to clean up the environment, do some climbing in Yosemite, do some sky diving, hang glide for a few years, catch Bob Seger in concert and die.

Lisa, who's majoring in communications, wants to get Barbara Walters' job on college graduation day. If that doesn't pan out, she can write for "National Lampoon." Lisa would be a natural and mother would be her most avid reader.

tinkering around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Fun 'n panic in Hamtramck

There's something about an expatriate.

Expatriates are professional guardians of nostalgia. They're people who have left the place where they've grown up but spend part of their time remembering with fondness a situation that once seemed intolerable.

When it comes to talking about the east side suburb of Hamtramck, I'm almost an expatriate. Its distinctive lifestyle was something I wanted to escape when I was younger, but now I look back on it with fondness.

And I'm not alone in this feeling of being away from home.

Last week, I attended a luncheon which served as an afterglow for the Polish Day Parade in Hamtramck. The luncheon was in Farmington Hills but the conversation was strictly east side.

There, I discovered a few persons who left the old hometown but, like many expatriates, return once in a while to recharge the memories.

But we never stay long enough to rediscover the reasons we decided to leave. That's the unspoken rule of being an expatriate.

ONE OF THE FAVORITE spots for residents and former residents of the city is the Workmen's Co-op on Yonans and Jos. Campuzi in the heart of Hamtramck.

It's difficult to recapture a place like this in the more conventional suburbs. Over the cash register is a portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt, as well-dusted as it was in 1942.

The wooden floors, tables and counters belong more to Roosevelt's time than to Carter's. And in the corner is an open newspaper rack. Customers have been known to read the paper over their meal and then replace it on the rack. It saves 16 cents and everybody gets a chance to read the paper since it's never sold out until late in the day when someone decides it's safe to take the Free Press home.

Polish, English and a goodly selection of other Eastern European languages mingle with the sounds of clattering dishes from the kitchen and

little children scraping their chairs against the floor. Workers, retirees, young families and just about anybody else can be found sipping the huge bowls of soup that sell for 75 cents. And running on the thick slices of bread are a part of the meal.

But to visit that restaurant is to take a walk back into the Hamtramck of my childhood. Even then, it was a disappearing lifestyle. I was born during the end of an era.

THERE ARE a few things that are getting more difficult to find these days. I miss going into a family-owned grocery store where the presence of the customer is announced by a bell on the door. Not a buzzer, but a bell tied to the door with a ribbon left over from Christmas.

My brother used to get into trouble because he would bang the door open and shut a few extra times just to hear the bell ring.

Of course the owners would be there on the double to check the source of the commotion. The building was constructed so the family lived behind the store.

BUT THAT'S VANISHED. As a friend of mine said, "Keep on missing that because I don't think you're going to find that again."

But there's one vestige of the good old days that I wasn't told to discover during one sunny summer afternoon.

A few years ago, I was a struggling student trying to prove to anyone who gave me two minutes that I could fit into a newspaper office's list of employees.

Finally, through the auspices of Wayne State University's Journalism department, I landed a summer position at the weekly Hamtramck Citizen.

I, of course, was determined to prove I was the female equivalent of Walter Cronkite, Woodward and Bernstein rolled into one.

assigned me to cover the local priory. Mayor William Kozerski was running to keep his spot, it was the sort of campaign that Hamtramck alone can produce. The issues were a combination of suburban concerns and city problems.

Clean alleys, clean streets and regular garbage pickup were part of the campaign. Then came Hamtramck's problems with HUD, which prevented the city from tearing down any of its property by court order.

THERE I WAS all set to prove I could do the job. Yeah, let me at them.

The mayor was scheduled to deliver a speech at a homeowners' meeting. It was part of the group's forum for candidates.

I arrived well ahead of time to study the audience. Elderly men and women, some of whom had walked to the meeting, conversed in Polish.

I caught smatterings of the conversation that I could understand but the more rapid-fire ones were lost on me.

The mayor walked in after a while and a hush fell on the group.

I got my notebook ready and the mayor readied himself for the speech.

It was a short speech, about five minutes, but for me it lasted an eternity.

I was panic-stricken because the mayor delivered his campaign speech in the language he knew his constituency understood.

The whole speech was in rapid-fire Polish.

I was prepared to fold myself up into my reporter's notebook which I had purloined from the WSU newspaper, the South End, for the occasion.

Pulling myself together, I managed to paraphrase what the mayor had said.

I HAD TO second guess the man because he left immediately after giving the speech.

Now, although I've listened to many political talks, I've yet to hear another one in Polish.

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