

Monday's Commentary

Winter soldier's musings recall forgotten war

We are the winter soldiers. There are no trips to Flanders' fields or musings along Normandy Beach. Dong Tam, Vinh Kim and My Phouc Tay are only places where war has etched eternal scars on our memories.

Veterans' Day is reserved for the public to remember where they were and what they were doing the day Pearl Harbor was attacked or how the crowds packed the streets in celebration on VJ Day.

We silently, to ourselves, but not among ourselves, remember the battle for the Plain of Reeds and the explosions of fuel storage tanks at Nha Bay.

Veterans of the world wars gather to drink with old friends and reminisce. We struggle to remember the names of the guys we fought next to, sharing the jungle, the mud, the death and the monsoon. We remember best being incessantly tired,

too tired to be even frightened or care if we lived.

The names are forgotten and the faces faded. Throughs gather at the tombs of the Unknown Soldiers and the Marine Corps Memorial as our comrades rest nearby, forgotten.

We have no memorials. Like other soldiers, we remember coming home. But unlike those others, we only can recall the lonesome greeting of vacant airport corridors late in the evening.

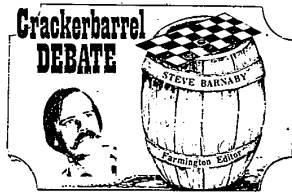
"Home already. Boy, that sure didn't seem like a year," said our friends, uncomfortably avoiding conversation about a war we were losing at home. We remember returning home and seeing our peers hoisting Viet Cong and North Vietnamese flags on campus malls. We recall being unable to find jobs and "getting by" on the too meager checks from the GI Bill for education, all the time

realizing that our fathers received much more for their military service.

But we said little and expected even less from a public which would rather forget. Quietly we watched television coverage of Saigon's fall, knowing that few in this country really cared and that many celebrate today even though they are unable to remember the date.

Silently outraged we read the statistics that more Vietnam veterans sit in prison and are unemployed as compared to veterans in previous wars. Yet little is done to help them or to understand why.

We fooled ourselves into believing that we easily could reintegrate back into society, joining everyone else in forgetting. But as the years pass, we silently stand apart, remembering to ourselves. We are the winter soldiers who fought a war for



our country thousands of miles away but lost at home.

But we remain proud. On this Veterans' Day and for many to come we shall remember our fallen comrades.

Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRAUTSKY

Sign quest yields answers

Shortcuts are almost an American tradition.

For taxes, there's the long form. Or, taxpayers can pick up the short form. This is the country that invents classic comic books, short and supposedly painless ways to imbibe good literature without an after-taste.

So it's not surprising that short cuts are one way persons use to judge if a driver knows his way around town.

And if you talk to Mrs. Sandra Curtis of St. Francis between Sedalia and Emmett, in Farmington Hills you'd swear there are a lot of good drivers in the city.

Mrs. Curtis, her husband Homer and her ten-year-old son live on a street that serves as a rush hour shortcut for drivers too impatient to suffer all the stop lights on Grand River near Eight Mile.

"You should sit on the corner here and count the cars some days. You'd be amazed," she said.

Their road, which winds its way around the local Taco Bell, looks like a cul de sac to the uninitiated. And the Curtis family with about 117 other persons in the area wish there were more uninitiated drivers on Grand River.

The Curtis family and the 117 persons who signed their petition for the Hills Engineering Department to put in a stop sign are worried that a short cut fan will cut short a young life if they aren't convinced to slow down.

OBVIOUSLY, drivers believe short cuts are no fun unless you get to zip down a relatively uncrowded side street.

Instead of volunteering to marshal a lap for the Farmington Hills Grand Prix, Mrs. Curtis is sending a letter to the engineering department along with her petition.

Most of her support comes from neighbors and parents from Edgewood Elementary School in the Clarenceville School District.

"Again the Edgewood PTO is coming to you for assistance in helping us solve a very serious problem existing in our school area, the letter, addressed to engineering's Leonard Chapman, begins.

"We have written you previously

stating the problem but the response is always that our streets are already as safe as possible.

"The fact of the matter is we need help in making our streets safer for the children. The yield signs are not sufficient. As early as last week we had another accident at St. Francis and Emmett that again landed in the yard of the house on the northwest corner. Had it happened at a time children were coming to or from school, it could have badly injured or even killed a child.

"Please don't wait till that happens.

"THERE IS AN accident equal to the one mentioned above at the rate of two a year. Our students deserve safe streets to walk to and from school on. Please don't wait until we lose one of our students due to an accident before you see our need.

"We need stop signs, school zone signs, speed limit signs and anything else you else you might suggest will help the situation," the letter continues.

In addition to the accident mentioned in the letter, which ended in a neighbor's fence and mailbox being torn down, there have been others. In the last instance the mailbox which was knocked down was posted on a steel beam.

The Curtis family has had a few unexpected guests drop into their yard over the last two years. Once, the driver pulled up to the side of the house. The next time another driver went through the Curtis' fence.

To add insult to injury, the Curtis' ended up paying to replace the fence. But replacing a fence isn't what bothers Mrs. Curtis the most. It's the thought that most of the accidents happen just before school opens or lets out.

ONCE a driver ended up going through the fence in front of the Bedford Inn when school had closed for the day.

That sort of timing prompted Mrs. Curtis and others in the neighborhood to ask for some sort of sign.

But the Hills engineering department says it isn't planning on putting

up a stop sign on each of the four corners Mrs. Curtis would like to see one. Speeders don't slow down for stop signs, according to Ralph Magid of the city's engineering department.

If drivers won't yield for the existing yield signs, chances are they'll coast through the stop signs eventually, he explained.

And there is the danger of putting up so many stop signs in the city that they becoming difficult to enforce and meaningless, he added.

The department conducted a traffic flow study of the area in January, 1977 to determine if a stop sign was needed. If there is an unusual volume of traffic, the sign goes up.

But the area failed to meet the standards for a stop sign, explained Magid.

Volume of traffic, loss of clear vision in an area caused by hills, sharp curves or tall trees justify a stop sign.

Speeding drivers don't justify a stop sign. Speeding drivers justify traffic tickets, according to the engineering department.

THE PROBLEM on St. Francis isn't unique to the city. Oaks, Colony Park and Independence Green are areas which report the same problems.

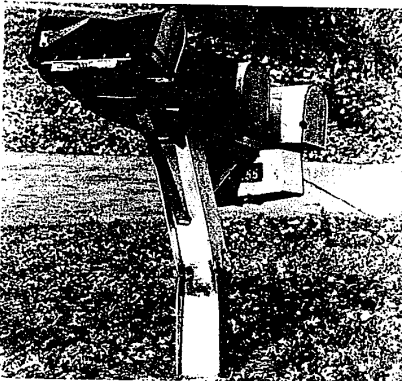
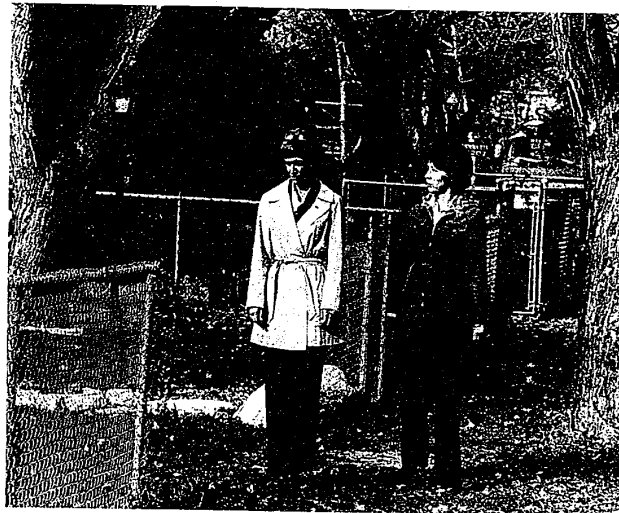
The streets are gravel, oil-covered or concrete. But the problem is the same. Most of the time the speeders are residents of the area, Magid explained.

If other residents see speeders, they ought to get the license number of the car and report it to the police, suggested Magid.

I'm not suggesting the engineering department is made up of persons competing to become ogre of the year. But I am suggesting that both sides recognize a problem but someone isn't being creative enough when it comes to solving it.

Would it hurt some master plan if a would crossing sign was added to the current crop of yield signs. Or maybe a "Slow, children crossing" sign.

If the city of Farmington can tolerate a Duck Crossing sign on its roads, the Hills ought to come up with something for children who also cross streets.



"Traffic on St. Francis has become a nightmare since drivers have begun using it for a quick way to avoid rush hour on Grand River. Sandra Curtis (top left) and neighbor Nancy Glenfield examine a gaping hole in a fence left by an automobile which ran up into a yard. Many drivers also have found mailboxes as convenient targets when they deviate from the road. Mrs. Curtis and her neighbors have petitioned Farmington Hills city hall for a stop sign at the corner of their street in hopes of making drivers slow down and think before becoming restless and endangering their children's lives. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)

from our readers

Councilman supports Hills recall effort

Editor:

On Oct. 27, when you asked me to comment on the effort to recall Mayor Dolan and councilmembers Smith and Jones, I made the following points which understandably were not printed due to space problems. I would greatly appreciate having my comments published in your letter to the editor section.

Realizing that the recall effort was beyond the point of return, I have decided to support it. I made the decision knowing well in advance that it is going to be a very hard road to travel especially for me as a member of city council. I simply could not fence the issue and I am interested in having this question resolved at the earliest possible time. Furthermore, I believe that the proponents have some very legitimate reasons.

Let me state at the outset, that there is nothing illegal, immoral or unconstitutional about any recall. It used to be that recall was only reserved for offenses of misfeasance and malfeasance in office. Recently, the law has been changed and recall can be initiated for almost any reason or no reason at all. The electorate can change its mind. I am supporting the recall effort because of the following:

I hold Mayor Dolan and Mrs. Smith directly responsible for the present confidence crisis in the city council. Ms. Jones happens to tag along.

Morale at city hall is at an all time low and they are directly responsible. Residents of the community are just as frustrated as I am. They do not know in which direction the council will fly next and the same frustration is shared by our city employees.

The HUD housing issue and mid-rise zoning question are only part of the problem. In my opinion, the main problem is their attitude as elected representatives, for they always contend to know best and to dare to stand up and be counted. In my book that is called arrogance.

Their voting record for the past several years has been just opposite to the pulse of the community and collectively they have denied the electorate the right to vote on several major issues.

I hold Mrs. Smith as chairwoman of citizen participation committee on the Community Development (HUD) program directly responsible for the program failure and for sparking the revolution by the south end residents. Ask any committee member what went on.

The question is raised why Earl Oppenheimer is not being recalled and he has supported mid-rise zoning.

The major question is why go into all the expense of a recall when they are up for election in November, 1979. Answer: The law on recall is very clear and timing is the essence. Including several major hurdles this question will be settled in March, 1979. To me, six months in the life of a city could mean years of problems.

The committee opposing recall, Citizens to Unite Farmington Hills, is distributing literature that the recall is a hoax. Why is it a hoax? Or is it more of a hoax to keep fighting the people's right to the ballot box which is the very essence of American democracy.

In conclusion, let me borrow a quote from Steve Barnaby's latest editorial, "Recall is not a civil war." Unfortunately, the recall opponents are turning it into a world war and you as a citizen should wonder why... are they afraid of the voters? They have every reason to be.

Recall is not evil. It is civil, constitutional and legal. It is the electorate's bill of rights to hold public officials accountable for their performance in office and for their promises.

Have they breached their promises? Yes. Have they desecrated the intent of the charter preamble? Yes. Have

they lost touch with the spirit of the type of city we created? Yes. Have they in mind and spirit truly represented you? No. Then, it is time for you to stand up

and demand your rights for true representative government. Think CURE (Citizens United for Recall).

JOE ALKATEER, Farmington Hills City Councilmember

Recall battle causes bitterness

Editor:

A council is a representative form of government whose opinions are supposed to differ. The present council members, all of them, were elected to represent all the people in this city of 55,000. Those who support the recall drive cry misrepresentation. What a joke. Because those who spearhead the

drive don't agree, they try to give the impression that this entire city agrees with them. How untrue. This recall drive is a divisive vendetta of a few trying to incite confuse and misrepresent the facts and the issues. Support our system of responsible government. Vote intelligently in the

next regular election. Act, don't react. I sincerely believe those who support the petition drive should be sent to Russia where government is composed of one line, one party, one view. That's what the recall represents.

MARCIA L. HIMELOCH, Farmington Hills

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