

editorial opinion



Smoke-Out: Kick those coffin nails

"Coughing is the only exercise I get. That's why I smoke," said Willoughby Wink, as the two of us listlessly strolled down the street.

The occasion of our conversation was the inauguration of my new Puma Bombers jogging shoes. After much contemplation, and with some reluctance, I had decided to turn a trend into something productive for myself.

So I joined the national mania by trekking down to the local jock shop and purchasing a pair of rather strange looking footwear.

"But Willoughby, why don't you try something like jogging, rather than smoking cigarettes?" I asked.

"Simon Barnaby, you're not kidding anybody. We know you've inhaled your quota of coffin nails over the years," Willoughby retorted.

"I guess you haven't heard. Today is the Great American Smoke-Out," I said. "The folks down at the American Cancer Society are urging smokers to douse the butts for one day just to see what it's like to breathe clean air."

"Couldn't hurt, you know," I said, picking up the pace as I listened to Willoughby wheeze.

Willoughby wasn't about ready to give up his defense of America's favorite coffee companion.

"But smoking makes me a lot more sociable," he explained. "You see, I don't buy cigarettes. I just burn them from everybody else. That way I get to meet a bunch of new people everyday."

Willoughby is a charter member of the Obnoxious, a service club for obnoxious persons. So it wasn't a surprise to hear that he constantly burns cigarettes.

Most of you out there know how that goes. You think you're going to quit so you come to work without a cigarette on you and instead you end up "borrowing" cigarettes all day.

"Look, Willoughby, did you ever stop to think what you're doing to your body? It'll kill you someday," I said.

"You've got to die sooner or later," he shot back.

"Well, how about making it later. After all, what would I do without you. The readers wouldn't know me without you by my side," I said.

Willoughby stopped in his tracks, stared at his cigarette and looked up at me.

"I'll think about it, Barnaby. Maybe you're right," he said.

Why don't you think about it and join in the Great American Smoke-Out for a day, anyway?

You've got nothing to lose and an awful lot to gain.

Ebenezer's example

After Ebenezer Scrooge was visited by the three spirits, it was said that he reformed and learned to keep Christmas in his heart all year long.

American merchants are following the reformed Scrooge's example by making the Christmas shopping season last longer and longer.

At one time, Thanksgiving Day was a day of thanksgiving. Some years ago, it was elevated to the position of kicking off the arrival of Santa Claus.

At the beginning of this decade, the Christmas shopping message began the day after Halloween.

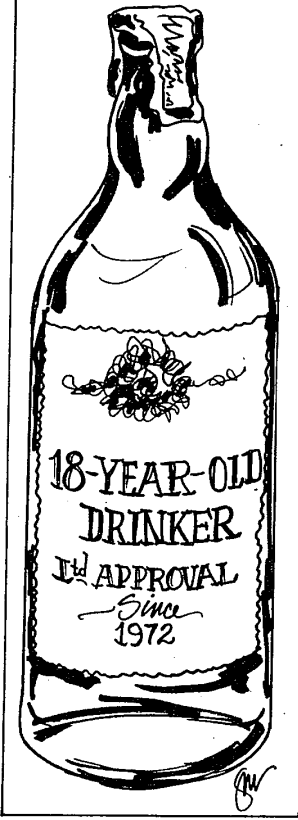
This year we heard our first Christmas message right after Labor Day.

In the same way the fall football season has been extended both directions and now runs from late June to mid-February, so, too, is the Christmas season running longer and longer.

"You Better Watch Out, You Better Not Cry" is good advice any season of the year, not just the days prior to Santa's arrival.

Christmas shopping season is a good stimulus for employment. Just think how many jobs could be created if we kept Christmas on our minds 12 months of the year instead of only four or five! We're getting the message, Ebenezer.

THE VOTERS GIVETH AND THE VOTERS TAKETH AWAY



The young don't change; they've learned by 18

It was just 18 years ago last weekend when I held this particular bit of Heaven in my arms for the first time. God called it a daughter.

Some years later, He might have wondered at His definition had He heard a sixth grader in a sandlot football game exclaim in wonderment as he dragged the explosive ball carrier to earth in the end zone, "Hey, guys, it's a girl!"

A southpaw, she can fling the pigskin with the accuracy of a Frankie Albert. She was born with a golf swing that would make Sam Snead proud to be her daddy. She can make a saxophone weep. We like her—the we being my chauvinistic concession to the indubitable fact that Mother Goose was in on the act.

Her beauty comes from her mother, her writing skill (which is considerable) from her Aunt Martha, her stubbornness from both sides of the family, and her common sense from the Lord himself.

We call her Betty.

WHAT DO a father and mother tell their only daughter as she turns 18 in today's society? Older brother Bob and his friends saw to a considerable amount of her growing-up education, and they did it well. We couldn't quarrel. We respected them.

She's a freshman at Eastern Michigan University and busy, busy, busy.

Please, God, may this young lady—and all by any name whom you bless—ever have the peace of mind, the determination for a better world, and the sense of kindness to others that you gave our Betty.

She thinks you probably would have joined her, had both of you had the right to vote last week in Michigan, in opposing Proposal D.

I DON'T mean to turn this into a political column. But it's as stupid to try and legislate the moral question of legal drinking age as it is to get pregnancy or fatherhood.

Figuratively speaking, did you ever live in Meredith Willson's River City? Do you remember Professor Harold Hill singing in "The Music Man"?

"Trouble, oh, we've got trouble, right here in River City, right here in River City. With a capital T and that rhymes with P and that stands for pool. We've surely got trouble. Right here in River City. Gotta figger out a way 'tkeep the young ones moral after school."

River City was said by Willson to have had a population of 2,212 Iowans when Professor Hill

through bifocals



arrived there in 1912. At the same point in time, real-life communities like Birmingham, Rochester, Farmington and Plymouth weren't too much larger. Quite likely their citizens were just as moral as the Iowans.

Willson's big hit from that sparkling musical, "Ya Got Trouble," included such lines as the following.

"NOW I KNOW all you folks are the right kind a' parents. I'm going to be perfectly frank. Would you like to know what kind a' conversation goes on while they're loafin' around that pool hall?"

"They're tryin' out Bevo, tryin' out Cubebs, tryin' out Tailor Mades like cigarette feeds. And braggin' all about how they're gonna cover up a tell-tale breath with Sen Sen."

"One fine night they leave the pool hall, headin' for the dance at the Arm'y. Libertine men and scarlet women! And ragtime, shameless music that'll grab your son and your daughter with the arms of a jungle animal instinct. Masteria! Friends, the idle brain is the Devil's Playground."

"Mothers of River City! Heed the warning before it's too late. Watch for the tell-tale signs of corruption!"

"The moment your son leaves the house, does he buckle his knickerbockers below the knee? Is there a nicotine stain on his index finger? A dime novel hidden in the corn crib?"

"Is he memorizing jokes out of Capt. Billy's Whiz Bang? Are certain words creeping into his conversation? Words like 'swell' and 'so's your old man'?"

"If so, ya got trouble... etc. etc. etc."

Times change, don't they, Grandpop? Morals change. The people don't—and knock 'em as you may, I'm proud of our young 'uns. Happy Birthday, Betty.

Truck stops make issue of fuel tax hike

As if we hadn't had enough of taxpayer petitions, another one is brewing. This time it concerns the two cents a gallon hike in motor fuel and hike in license fees recently enacted by our heroes in the Michigan Legislature.

State Sens. John Welborn (R-Kalamazoo) and Harry DeMaso (R-Battle Creek) were opposed to the increase. Their goal is to get enough petition signatures by the end of the year and put the questions on the 1980 ballot.

Welborn is an "aginner." In Gerald Ford's home state, Welborn was 1976 chairman for Ronald Reagan. DeMaso is different. He's to the right of center but not doctrinaire, a problem solver and an expert on the nuts and bolts of taxation.

So we shouldn't write off their petition drive as a sorehead thing.

BOTH SENATORS come from the south-central part of the state. In their districts are stations that sell fuel to truckers.

As I listened to the floor debate in the senate, it was the diesel fuel tax more than the overall tax increase that was bothering some senators.

They argued that Michigan would lose 30 to 40 per cent of its diesel fuel tax revenue, along with a lot of truck stop business, if the diesel fuel hike were put through.

The situation is that neighboring states collect seven to eight cents a gallon tax on diesel fuel. If Michigan raises its diesel tax to nine cents, truckers will gas up across the border. With their large tanks, they will be able to make deliveries in almost any part of the state and return across the border before they have to refuel.

It's obvious political nonsense to raise the gasoline tax two cents a gallon and not the diesel fuel tax. Trucks, as well as autos, use the roads, too. We must either raise all fuel taxes, as the majority



Tim
Richard

in the legislature voted to do, or none, as Welborn and DeMaso propose.

THE MUCH-HERALDED "tax revolt" turned out to be less of a concern in Michigan Nov. 7 than the politicians—including Richard Headlee and Robert Tisch—had supposed.

Headlee's pitch was based on a distorted set of figures, and his tax limitation plan barely passed although polls had showed it leading. Tisch's version of California's Proposition 13 went bust. So did the voucher plan, which contained a property tax cut.

And incumbent legislators of both parties tended to win by bigger margins than ever. With the

notable exception of Sen. Robert Griffin, Michiganders liked their local lawmakers pretty much the way they are.

It has been nine years since Michigan has seen a statewide increase in passenger and commercial vehicle registration fees and five years since any increase in fuel taxes. The notion that we're being taxed to death for roads is simply untrue.

AND YET we bump up against the reality that Michigan businesses will lose income and the state will lose tax revenue if truckers fill up across the border. Michigan cannot afford to disregard competition.

The fault in our thinking is the concept of the "user" tax—that taxes on automotive products should support roads, taxes on hunters should purchase hunting lands, taxes on sales and property should support schools.

Michigan's transportation system—roads, rails, buses, airports, ports and the rest—needs more revenue. I have stronger and stronger doubts about levying specific taxes for that fund. The personal income and single business taxes should have been the logical alternative.

Focusing on middle age

About a year ago, I thought my wife was entering a romantic era. Every time we went out to dinner, she would look casually at the menu and say, "Why don't you order for both of us?"

Other times she would say, "What looks good on the menu?" and other times she would rely entirely on what the waiter recommended.

The light started to dawn when she began asking me to look up telephone numbers in the phone book.

THEY SAY that as you approach middle age, your eyes change, and you become more farsighted. This doesn't affect a near-sighted person who is used to putting on glasses when he or she can't see.

But slightly far-sighted persons avoid glasses in their early years because they can read charts and things at a distance and never have to worry about renewing their drivers licenses for fear someone will check that little box saying they need corrective lenses.

It turns out that my wife isn't the only one going through this stage. A good friend was in Atlanta and wanted to call his brother but didn't know the number.

He tried to use the phone book at a public phone, but it was chained to the rack and the lighting wasn't very good.

First he tried to stand on his tip-toes to read the book. It didn't work.

Fortunately, he had a pair of pliers in his pocket, so he snipped the chain and carried the book over to a window where he could hold the book at arm's length and see the number.

After finding the number, he returned the book and reattached the chain.



by HENRY M. HOGAN, JR.

WHETHER IT IS vanity or not, these stricken people try to adjust for awhile without getting glasses.

Then they call for help. But everyone knows it takes six months to get an appointment with an ophthalmologist, so they are in limbo, waiting.

The cocktail circuit tells me the normal procedure is to head for K mart or Sears and buy ready-made glasses for \$6 or \$8.

People buy several pairs and leave them around the house so they don't have to carry them. If you have three extensions on your telephone, you buy three pairs.

These ready-made glasses come in different focal lengths so you might buy three different types—one for phone books, one for reading bigger type and one for driving.

Of course, if one eye is different from the other, you probably wreck your eyes, but that doesn't seem important as long as you can get by without carrying glasses.

Whoever said "life begins at 40" apparently never ate out much and hardly ever used the telephone.

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