



**Tom Riordan**

Executive Editor

## Say 'housing for seniors' and sparks fly

These days in suburbia, one way to set sparks flying is to mention senior citizen housing.

As one long-time Birmingham resident lady in her 80s calmly noted when the topic came up, "Oh, that's when they bring the poor blacks from Detroit into Birmingham."

And she believed what she was saying. I almost fell out of my chair.

That's one extreme.

There's the opposite, coming from the pseudo-expert bureaucrats who say "We know what's best. We'll decide how government-subsidized housing is going to work. And we have a deal for you! But don't ask about details."

THE TRUTH LIES somewhere between these two poles.

But to find it takes discussions and considerations.

It takes honest research.

It takes solid thinking locally and open minds.

It takes government officials within communities affected who know precisely what they are talking about.

Which brings us to a guy named Ed McNamara, mayor of Livonia.

His community has constructed nearly 650 units of housing for senior citizens. Add to that nearly 100 more built by two religious groups in Livonia and you have an impressive lineup.

But that's only the beginning. Right now a private

developer is pushing through preparation work for 200 more. There will most certainly be others what with a waiting list of 2,100 seniors at Livonia's city hall.

MUCH OF THE CREDIT for this impressive progress in senior citizen housing goes to McNamara. He has become an expert in this area.

It might be profitable for officials from communities presently embroiled in battles over senior citizen housing to sit down with McNamara. They can find how McNamara and Livonia did it.

McNamara would probably say, as he did to me during a recent interview, "It's wrong when a housing situation becomes divisive within a community. The city should back off."

He'd point out that "there's money to be made in senior citizen housing; it's attractive as hell, with tax-free bonds."

But it's not for the uninitiated, McNamara would caution, "You need lots of know-how, connections in government, connections in the financial world."

WHAT MIGHT AMAZE some folks is that four of Livonia's five senior projects have been built with U.S. Housing and Urban Development loans. And there never has been any anguished cries of outrage over any of these projects.

That's because each effort was always carefully planned and presented step by step to the citizenry. So HUD need not be a dirty word.

The Livonia mayor is convinced that cities can

work with HUD. His town's expansive array of senior housing proves that.

But he doesn't have the same regard for MSHDA - the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

"Stay away from them. They throw too many curve balls. They confuse communities, or the developers (confuse communities) with last-minute rules."

The municipality, through its own housing authority, must keep a tight rein on housing projects, McNamara warns.

FARMINGTON HILLS currently is working with MSHDA on a major senior citizen housing proposal, and there are problems, not necessarily associated with the state agency.

Mainly, city officials are being challenged by a group, Citizens for More Responsible Government. CMRG founders oppose the Farmington Hills project based on a distaste for any low-income or subsidized housing.

Farmington Hills Tuesday had a primary city council election. The top three vote getters ran mainly on an anti-senior citizen housing platform.

Other towns, notably Birmingham, have run city commissions out of office via recall elections because those officials supported the concept of housing for seniors and working with federal subsidies.

Talking to McNamara could help other suburban cities avoid this sort of extremism.

ONE OTHER TOWN that's forging ahead in senior housing is Rochester.

It's new Danish Village, a complex of 150 units which will cost \$5.5 million, is a project of Lutheran Social Services of Michigan and Danish Old People's Home, Inc.

A HUD loan of \$4.9 million is the project's key.

Part of the deal is that some of the units in Danish Village must be rented to handicapped persons.

It's expected to be ready for occupancy next spring.

Are there people who want to live there?

The answer comes from Marye Miller, director of the Rochester-Avon Recreation Authority's senior citizen program.

Last week, Ms. Miller announced that to date more than 700 applications have been received for the 150 units.

CHANCES ARE EXCELLENT that if other communities were to poll their seniors on a desire to move into something like Danish Village in Rochester or McNamara Towers in Livonia (named after the late Sen. Patrick McNamara, not the present mayor), results could be as overwhelming as those reported by Ms. Miller.

It all seems to get down to what local governments want to do about their aging citizens.

That includes, or will soon include, many of you reading these words.

Maybe I should say, what kind of housing do we or will we want?

## When is child old enough to visit dentist?

Dear Dr. DeFrancesco: At what age should I start my son for periodic examination and prophylaxis?

C.D.

If the child comes to me prior to the age when I can reason with him, he will cry constantly and remonstrate and will carry on as a matter of course during subsequent visits until he is age 5 or 6.

Children can be victims of habit. If a child comes to a dentist at age 3 or 4, one can reason with him and dispel the crying habit through friendly, instructive comment in the first few minutes of the initial appointment.

Dear Dr. DeFrancesco: My son has had deciduous teeth prematurely extracted. Does he need a space retention?

A.F.

As a matter of routine, parents should be informed, when deciduous teeth are extracted prematurely, of the need for space retainers.

A large majority of parents, either through lack of funds or lack of interest, fail to evidence much concern at the time. But later on, when corrective work is needed, when the orthodontist tells them that premature extraction of deciduous teeth is responsible for the condition, they will say critically, "Why didn't my dentist tell me?"

Dear Dr. DeFrancesco: My daughter has green



**Dr. Joseph DeFrancesco**

stains on her teeth. Do these stains cause damage to the teeth?

F.E.

The most common green stains on enamel occur on both the temporary and the permanent teeth, particularly of young persons. The color of these stains varies from light green to greenish black.

This deposit may lead to decalcification of the enamel. This stain is preceded by a lack of dental hygiene.

Collections of food debris are not removed from the surfaces of the teeth, which implies that prior to the formation of green stains, the affected enamel surfaces have been subjected to the action of fermenting food debris - that is, to acids.

Dear Dr. DeFrancesco: My son sucks his thumb. What can I do to break the habit?

H.G.

Infants are born with a natural instinct for sucking. Thumbs and fingers are ready objects for satisfying this need.

Generally the action produces no lasting effect on

the arrangement of the permanent teeth and the development of the jaws - unless the habit continues after age 4. Then the extent of deformity depends on the frequency, intensity and duration of the sucking procedure.

Persistent thumb sucking results most frequently in spacing and protrusion of the upper front teeth.

Parents who are overly concerned with the early breaking of this habit actually may contribute to its continuance. Children aware of the parental concern may suck defiantly as an attention-getter.

This concludes Dr. DeFrancesco's series of articles - a series that was prolonged beyond the planned 13 weeks because of reader questions. As usual, this newspaper invites comments on our columns and ideas for new ones.

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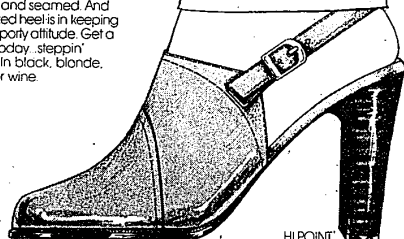
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