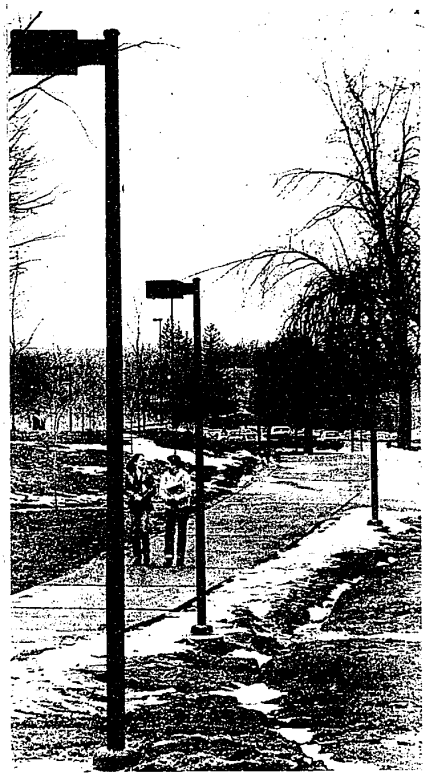
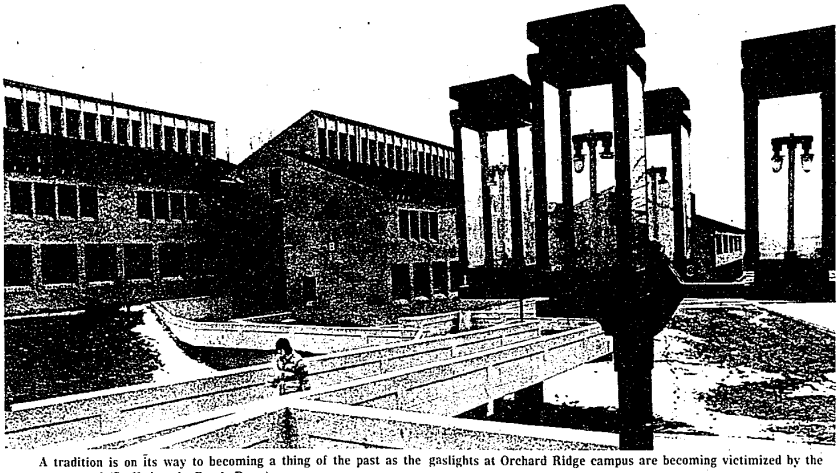
Hills landmark falls victim to energy crunch



Lining the walkways of the Orchard Ridge campus are new electric lights which officials say are cheaper than natural gas and are vandal proof.(Staff photo)



A tradition is on its way to becoming a thing of the past as the gaslights at Orchard Ridge campus are becoming victimized by the energy crunch.(Staff photo by Randy Borst)

By SANDI HORNE

In a move to cut fuel costs and conserve energy, 1,500 gas lights will be snuffed out at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College (OCC).

The gas lights, a trademark of the Farmington Hills campus, are being replaced by 150 electric lights. The conversion began in the spring of 1979 and should be completed this spring.

Originally, there were four gas lights on each of the 150 poles. Now there will be one electric unit on each pole.

Once all of the electric lights are in operation, the campus will save $30,000 annually in fuel bills, according to campus Provost Richard Thompson.

The annual cost for operating the gas lights is $60,000.

The initial cost of replacing the gas lights is $350,000 and will be funded by municipal bonds. That sum, plus the electric bill over a 20-year period, upkeep and inventory costs, will result in a $30,000 yearly reduction.

The OCC Board of Trustees reached the decision to make this conversion in October 1978. An engineering firm discussed costs of the gas bill, parts, repairs and maintenance with the board and advised them to make the change.

Due to a federal law passed in 1978, which outlawed residential or commercial gas lights, the college had no option but to make the change.

The gas lights have been in operation at OCC since the college opened in 1968.

"The gas lights were installed mainly for an aesthetic reason," said Thompson. "At that time it was cheaper to operate the gas lights for 24 hours a day. By 1977, it was apparent that gas was no longer a cheaper way to go."

Members of the community have always been critical of the cost of operating the gas lights, said Thompson.

"We've gotten many calls from people who tell us to turn out the lights at night. We tell them that we can't."

The main reason for the change, however, was the budget, he said.

Neighbors in nearby Biddestone Subdivision have been watching the change with suspicion.

"The neighbors didn't want daylight in their windows all night, and thought that if the gas lights were removed, the campus wouldn't look nice," he said.

Thompson said the electric lights would enhance the appearance of the college and will be located so that all areas of the campus receive ample light.

"We could have had two big lights," said Thompson. "But aesthetic reasons have to be considered, too."

The new lights will be located so persons can see when they are going to their cars.

Light fixture colors will be the same as the metal work on the campus buildings.

The electric lights will be maintenance free. The campus won't need to devote money to pay a full time employee and won't need a truck solely for the maintenance as was done with the gas fixtures.

"The lights are also virtually vandal proof," said Thompson.

The old gas lights will be taken away by a contractor. The college is keeping 150 of them to sell to campus or community persons. Proceeds will go to the campus development committee. Persons interested in the lamps can call OCC at 476-9400.

Educators remembered

Famous educators will be recalled on March 12 with reenactments done by staff members at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College.

The show will be at 7:30 p.m. in Building J, room 293. The campus is located at 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills.

John Dewey will be played by Dr. Don Nichols, WEB DuBois by Curtis Anderson, Maria Montessori, by Suzanne Reynolds, Jean Piaget, by Art Wiggins and Jean Jacques Rousseau by Gerry Faye.

The program is a take-off on Steve Allen's award winning "The Meeting of the Minds" television program.

A reception and one woman art show by Agnes Smith will be held in K lobby after the performance.

The exhibited drawings and oils of Smith illustrate her devotion to the recreation of human emotion.

THE INSIDE * ANGLE

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

THE STRAINS of Happy Birthday were heard floating through the halls of Flanders Elementary School last week when the school band saluted teacher Marion Spencer on her birthday. Ms. Spencer, who teaches a combination class of first and second graders, was further surprised that afternoon when she went out to her car. Teachers had attempted to stuff her car with balloons. But when they discovered her car was locked, they opted for attaching the balloons to the front, back and sides of Ms. Spencer's auto. On the windshiel was a large birthday card from the staff. IA wants to add to the celebration (belatedly) by sending Ms. Spencer her very own Angles salute. IA bets you can't guess what this salute is meant to be, Ms. Spencer: □□□□□□□□. (Give up? Would you believe stylized chalk board erasers?)

SPRING is the time of year when young boys think of camping out. Boy Scout Troop 179 is making this dream a definite possibility for some this summer by opening up its membership for new recruits. Scouting is open to boys more than 10½-years-old or those who have completed the fifth grade. The troop is sponsored by the Central Church of Christ on Eleven Mile west of Drake. Meetings are from 7:15-9 p.m. on Tuesdays in the church or sometimes in Farmington Training Center's gym (the old Farmington Junior High building.)

Weekly meetings include games, first aid lessons, scout crafts and skills, according to Scoutmaster John Richardson. There is a monthly weekend campout. Summer camp this year is scheduled for the week of June 22-29 at Lost Lake near Clare. Camp activities include swimming, lifesaving, boating, canoeing and fishing as well as archery, marksmanship and handicrafts. Registration is $2. The national magazine, "Boys Life" costs $3.60 for a year's subscription. Weekly troop dues are 25 cents and weekend campouts cost about $5-$6 for food and camp fees. Summer camp is $52 excluding transportation to and from the site and personal spending money. The rest of the troop's expenses are earned through a yearly fertilizer sale. For further information call Richardson at 476-3662 during business hours or Senior Patrol Leader Dave Tupper at 474-5771.

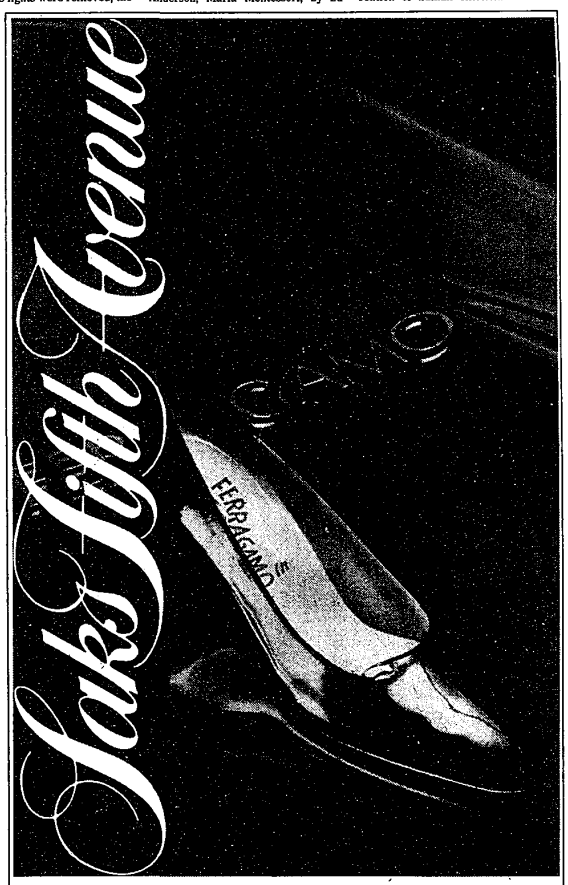
AHH, DENTISTS Possibly the most maligned workers (besides dog catchers and garbage men). But like the other two unappreciated groups, the dentistry world is trying to overcome its reputation for being real pains. Recently, the kindergarten class at Flanders Elementary School were visited by members of the Oakland County Dental Auxiliary which is making the round of schools in Farmington. Students were given the chance to examine their own dental patient, a manequin named Michael. The little dentists were given acess to drills, cuspidors and evacuators.

And, of course, much like the health classes mom and dad used to have in school, the Flanders students had a chance to practice the correct way of brushing their teeth on a set of giant choppers. They also saw a film strip about going to the dentist putting the whole experience into its proper perspective. (IA can think of a few adults who could benefit from that program.)

NORTH FARMINGTON HIGH S School has just received a new Citation from Chevrolet, the folks who want you to see the USA in their product. The school has a place for the new vehicle, even if it isn't fit to put on the road, any road. The car is among 3,500 passenger cars and trucks damaged by accidents, floods or other mishaps on their way to dealer showrooms and donated to schools and other institutions to help students study automotive mechanics. The cars are available to non-profit education institutions. The vehicles must never be operated again. Recipients sign an affidavit that the cars won't be driven.

Donation tags are fastened onto the vehicle and Chevy removes the vehicle identification numbers. All the school has to do is be prepared to tow the car away when Chevy calls.

FARMINGTON HILLS Parks and Rec is offering a variety of films to help you and your child(ren) escape the last monotonous days of winter. The movies scheduled for the series are: "National Velvet," shown at 3:15 p.m. Feb. 29 in Wooddale Elementary School, 28600 Peppermill, and at noon, March 1, in Shiawassee Recreation Center; "Dr. Doolittle" shown at 3:15 p.m. March 7 in Wooddale and at noon March 8 in Shiawassee Recreation Center, Shiawassee near Nine Mile; "My Side of the Mountain" shown at 3:15 p.m. March 14 in Wooddale and at noon March 15 in Shiawassee; "Charlotte's Web" shown at 3:15 p.m. March 21 in Wooddale and at noon March 22 in Shiawassee. A series pass for children is $1.50 and $3 for adults. Individual showings are 50 cents for children and $1 for adults. If you like, bring a pillow to sit on. Seats will be available for the pillow-less. Shiawassee will offer refreshments. Tickets may be purchased at the parks and rec office, 31555 Eleven Mile or at the first showing date.



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