

editorial opinion

Pshaw, it's hard to buy a gas guzzler

Never let it be said that international affairs don't affect a guy's personal life.

Take mine, for instance. I want to buy a new car. Well, I should say I've got to buy one. The old Toyota, five years old real age, 80 years old by human count, has about had it. From the way it burns oil, it alone could be held accountable for the fossil fuel shortage in this country.

So about two weeks ago I set out looking for a new machine. The dream — to buy a nice big car. For years I've been the struggling young idealist, determined to economize by purchasing small cars. Volkswagens and Toyotas were perfect for such sophomoric philosophy in this country of bounty. But in the last few years, I've noted that the old back just isn't as comfortable in the small c.

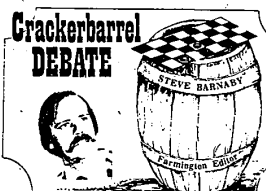
"Just once," I thought, "owning a big car would be fun. Money be damned."

With glee I looked at Lincoln Continentals, giggled over the thought of buying a Cadillac Brougham, dreamed of sweeping down the road in a Thunderbird and lusted (in my heart, of course) over a Buick Riviera.

I was having a ball. Then it happened. This country's most famous peanut farmer jolted me from my blissful daydreams with the announcement that gasoline could possibly be rationed to two gallons a day.

Suddenly, I pictured myself lounging about my giant gas guzzler, stranded on the freeway sans the valuable wet stuff.

Now it's hard to imagine that one little old "holy man" in far-off Iran could ruin an American



dream. After all, I had never even heard of the guy until a couple of months ago.

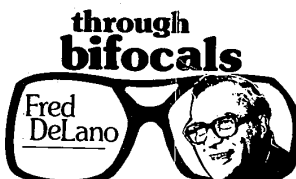
But if you stop and think about it for a minute, it

makes sense. After all, every time the Ayatollah Khomeini popped up on the news, he was walking. No big limos for him. But that's the way it goes when you're a holy man.

Now I've been accused of being a lot of things, but never a holy man. I don't have hordes of worshippers carrying my picture around. Personally, I think it takes a whole bunch of gall for that dude to try and determine what kind of car I drive.

The next thing you know, he'll find a way to cut off power to beauty shops around the world and American women will be forced to wear babushkas — just like in Iran.

Oh well, it's time to make the rounds of car dealerships again. You know, I do recall seeing the Ayatollah riding in a van once.



Dearie, remember the time you...?

Last Friday's fog crept across our towns with the stealth of a cat. A friend of mine, who used to purr when such a sea-scented cloud caressed and then enveloped the Pacific shore, would have loved it.

A statuesque beauty, she was among the better press agents in southern California. One year we decided to collaborate on a novel. Fog was to be its central force. Time after time we framed an opening paragraph while gazing at the hypnotic, restless ocean which her beachhouse faced.

Invariably, the frustration of semantics and the mystic sea combined to convince this well-developed woman — who became the widow of a professional wrestler — that she could write better toppers.

I couldn't, and we never finished page one.

Not only did all this come back into memory during last week's heavy Michigan fog, but so did Janet Barber's enema, which I've decided is a perfect characterization of inflation circa 1979.

AS WAS THE WONT of first grade teachers many years ago, Janet's instructor at that plateau of the educational process asked the boys and girls of her class one Monday morning to tell of the weekend's most interesting experience.

There probably were 20 to 25 youngsters in attendance. I was one of them and will go to my grave remembering only two details of that entire academic year: The physical experience which was foremost in Janet's mind and the fact that the teacher was my own mother.

Thank God, smalltown classroom modesty included only "tell" . . . not "show and tell."

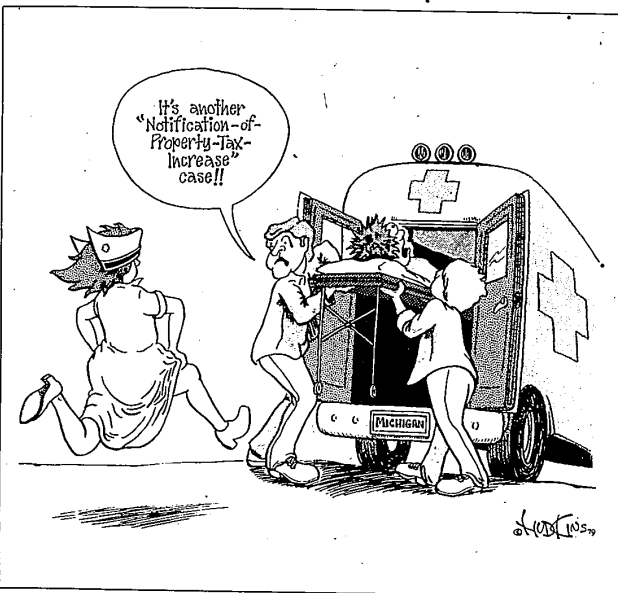
A dozen years later, Janet reigned as queen of the Blossom Festival at Benton Harbor and St. Joseph. What a pity I was a freshman in far-off Ann Arbor. Local reporters never knew the royal feature story waiting to be written.

IN A SENSE recreating the scene, I asked several people not long ago what the highlights of their weekend had been. Almost all included in their recitations the fact they had made the weekly excursion to the supermarket.

It was foremost in mind because this was where they had spent the most money. Socially, they had encountered a number of friends bent on the same bit of economic foraging.

"The \$10-per-bag budget consideration of not too long ago already has gone to \$20-per-bag," groaned one acquaintance. "Load a cart full and it costs a hundred bucks. Where's it all going to end?"

I'm sure that in Janet Barber's memorable weekend experience, the physical hosing was as gentle as possible. The hosing we're getting from inflation to date knows no such approach. Nonetheless, one could still use the same word to describe the result.



Behind the scenes

How to catch a Superbowl

Just about two years ago, the State of Michigan gave the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau a \$15,000 grant to assist it in bringing functions to the Pontiac Silverdome.

The state gives these grants because the tourist industry is the second biggest industry in the state, and any event that brings people here from other states increases employment, commerce and sales tax collections.

Approximately 400,000 jobs are directly related to travel and tourism in Michigan. For each \$12,000 spent here, a new job is created.

THE OCT&CB sat around and asked, "What could we bring in to Oakland County that would be spectacular?"

Someone suggested they try to attract the "Pro Bowl," the all-star professional football game.

The committee went to the Detroit Lions to see what they could do to be considered for the Pro Bowl.

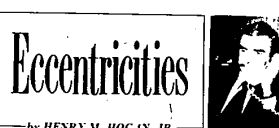
The Lions were less than enthusiastic. It seems the Pro Bowl is a drug on the market.

The home football club has to add an additional game onto their season ticket package, which increases the cost and cuts down the number of persons who can afford season tickets.

The only reason the Pro Bowl was held in Seattle and Tampa Bay in the last couple of years was because it was a condition of their getting franchises in the National Football League.

The pro players themselves are not overly enthusiastic about playing in the game because they could injure themselves and hurt their football careers — the results of the game mean nothing.

So the committee got the bright idea of trying to bring the Superbowl to Detroit.



WE ALL HAVE read recently about the Republican National Convention coming to Detroit in 1980. That convention will bring in close to \$10 million to Detroit's economy.

In 1977, the Superbowl brought in more than \$127 million to the Los Angeles economy in less than a week. It is anticipated that it would bring in \$60 million to \$80 million to Detroit if we got it — or more than seven times that of the Republican National Convention.

Because of the size and impact of the Superbowl project, the Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau was invited to participate.

The committee decided to try for 1981 so it would have time to use the game as an economic development incentive. If anyone were planning a new hotel or other project, he or she would have time and reason to proceed at the earliest moment.

The committee discussed it with the Silverdome people, and in less than 90 days made a presentation to the National Football League owners in New York in June of 1977. At that time, the owners selected the sites for 1979 and 1980 but not 1981.

SINCE THAT TIME, the committee has been meeting almost every Tuesday morning, getting ready for the next presentation, getting hotel commitments, enlisting support of police and highway people, planning activities for Superbowl week and so forth.

Prominent people were added to the committee. Ernie Jones of D'Arcy-MacManus agreed to chair the committee.

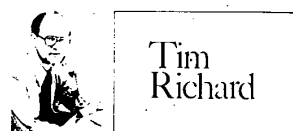
The point in bringing Superbowl to Detroit is that football started in the Midwest, and most of the NFL fans are here, but the Superbowl is always played in the Sun Belt.

The major TV sponsors of NFL football are the auto companies. Ernie Jones enlisted their support for the project.

The moment of truth is at hand. The selection of the Superbowl site for 1981 and 1982 will be made March 13 in Hawaii by the NFL owners.

The committee is ready. We won't have long to wait to see if the effort has paid off.

(Hogan also is chairman of the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau.)



'Urban policy' much too narrow for NE, Midwest

Is the Carter Administration thinking too small with its "national urban policy"?

Instead of thinking of stopping the drain from big cities, shouldn't Washington be thinking in terms of stopping the drain from the Midwest and Northeast?

That message leaps out at you from the literature of the Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition, organized just last year with U.S. Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.) as chairman.

Such Michigan congressmen as Bob Traxler (D-Bay City) and Lucien Nedzi (D-Detroit) are on the group's steering committee. Rep. Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth) is taking a strong interest.

THEIR FIGURES show this:

- Since 1973, the North has lost 533,000 industrial jobs while the South has gained 600,000 jobs.

- While losing jobs, the North was sending \$30 billion more in taxes to Washington than it was getting back. The South, while gaining jobs, was getting \$22 billion more in federal spending from Washington than it was sending.

- In the 1930s, per capita income in the South was one-third of what it was in the North. Today the figures are nearly balanced. Meanwhile, Northern energy costs and prices in general are more than in the South.

- Such sun belt states as Georgia have 62 per cent of their Medicaid costs reimbursed by Uncle Sam. Major northern states get only 50 per cent back.

THE CRY of the Northeast-Midwest regionalists is not to shaft the South. It's to say that times have changed since the 1930s, and it's now the North that is being drained of people, investment and federal taxes.

Regionalism, they say, is not an invention of the moment.

In the 19th Century, the U.S. practiced regionalism by encouraging westward expansion through its land and railroad policies. We need look no further than East Lansing to see an example of 19th century federal policy at work to help western farming.

The New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt had a strong southern tilt. The Tennessee Valley Authority, the Rural Electrification Administration, farm legislation for such crops as tobacco and cotton — these and others helped the South. Northern congressmen gladly voted for them, seeing the justice of the cause.

WHAT NORTHERN congressmen don't often say is that some of the North's problems are self-made.

Industry is looked on, not as the goose that lays golden eggs, but as a docile cow to be milked and, then, kicked around by governmental regulations and the tender mercies of unionism.

The North is waking up on that abuse. Recently the Livonia City Council voted to give General Motors Corp. a property tax break to keep a Cadillac operation from moving out of state. The Detroit City Council showed some statesmanship by agreeing to let the Cadillac plant move out of Detroit into Livonia, reasoning that Livonia was a shorter commute for workers than Ohio or Arkansas.

It's up to Michigan congressmen, local officials and plain citizens to take a hard look at federal decisions against public works investments in the northern suburbs. Will canceling these projects serve the "national urban policy" and stop the "draining of the cities"?

Or is it a matter of trying to stop the economic blood-letting of the North and transfusions to the South?

Michigan's city and suburban politicians need to start looking at each other as allies. They need to think of a big region rather than as city versus suburbs.

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