

## Inflation & heat are catalysts

# Family feuds are on the upswing with spring

By JACKIE KLEIN

Part I of a series

"Potatoes are cheaper, tomatoes are cheaper, now's the time to fall in love," were words of a popular song during the depression years.

Today, the lyrics might be changed to, "Gas is higher, taxes are higher, now's the time to pick a family fight."

The recession-inflation-frustration blues are a major factor in family squabbles, according to Southfield Police Officer Donald MacKercher of the youth bureau.

Police logs show about 150 domestic spats a year in Southfield and 30 this May. But that's only the tip of the iceberg, MacKercher said, because many more go unreported.

"People just paid their income tax, the cost of gas is rising, food prices are out of sight and inflation is rampant," the officer said. "Almost everyone's dissatisfied with everything. Conflicts start in the home."

"A guy who can't afford to feed his family may take his frustrations out on his wife and kids. In Southfield, you might say family feuds are middle-income problems. Henry Ford doesn't worry if gas is 69 cents or \$1."

SPRING came early this year, MacKercher reflected, and pent-up emotions were left over from the severe winter. People's hopes began to rise in May, but economic conditions didn't improve. When members of a

family are depressed, bored, suffering from holiday let-downs and unable to cope, they often start battling, the officer said.

"Sure, family fights are on the upswing in good weather," MacKercher said. "But if you think May was bad, wait until July and August when it's really hot and people are irritable. There's more drinking in the summer; many families won't be traveling because of the energy problem and neigh-

bors are around to report disturbances.

Most family squabbles aren't severe. But I remember one husband who was so frustrated with his wife, he fired his gun at the ceiling five times and pretended his spouse was up there. You can't overlook mental disturbances in domestic fights."

Police officers can't get too involved in family quarrels, MacKercher contended, because their presence can start another fight and most squabblers really don't want police interference. It's routine to respond to bank robberies and tanker explosions, he claimed, but you never know what to expect in a family fight.

"We used to try to split up battling couples until they calmed down," MacKercher said. "If the husband was belligerent and intoxicated, he might have been arrested for being drunk in public, but the charge was almost always dismissed."

"CONTEENDERS in family fights become highly emotional. But they're usually not seeking criminal prosecu-

tion for their spouses. If they're on the verge of separation, they want documentation. But with no fault divorce, even that is minimized."

"One guy used to call the police department five times a week to complain about his wife and build up a portfolio. That's not the mission of a police force, and cops often end up with mustard on their faces."

All family fights don't involve husbands and wives, MacKercher pointed out. Mothers scrap with daughters, fathers battle with sons and often every-one gets into the act.

Many spats are alcohol-related, he said, and both the abused and the abuser need help. Two major factors in fractured marriages are money and sex, he contended.

"Men tend to show their masculinity and superiority, but the women's role has changed in the last 15 years," he said. "More women are in the job market and the political arena and they demand their civil rights."



### Community Center sets annual meeting

The Farmington Community Center's annual meeting of the members begins at 8 p.m. Tuesday, June 19, in the center at 24705 Farmington Rd.

The once-a-year event is open to all persons who have contributed to the center during the past year.

Main purpose of the meeting is the

election of board members. There are also some by-laws to be amended which will be proposed.

The center's board of directors said that all contributing parties to the center are considered members and consequently have a vote.

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