

Farmington Observer

Successor to the Farmington Enterprise

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opinion

Human values stand above property values

"You know, Steve, what's happening in our economy isn't all bad. Sure, it's hard to get through, but Americans have had too much, spent too much, gone overboard."

This epistle came from a local real estate dealer who wandered into the office the other day to drop off a press release.

The cordial greeting "How's business?" brought on the response.

"It's a good thing we've got land contracts or we all would be out of business right now," he continued. "But at least housing prices are beginning to come down."

"Something had to happen to stop this inflation in the housing market. People were just paying too much for their homes."

The conversation ended on a mutual note of sympathy for those who have paid top price for a home on which they probably never will get a full return because of the depressed housing industry.

THIS PENCHANT for "keeping up" property values has caused us all a lot of unnecessary grief.

Frankly, we've too often let our hearts overrule our intellect when it comes to property values.

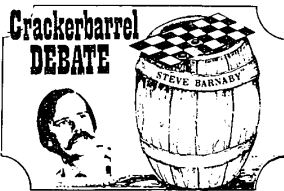
Over the years, in countless council meetings, inevitably someone gets up and questions how this or that issue will effect the property value of his home.

For years suburbia has been on a speculation spree, with homeowner hopefuls lining up to pay any price for a home. Instead of years, houses were changing owners in months.

Meanwhile, developers were having a ball. Making lots of bucks, they were gobbling up land and building subdivisions farther and farther away from the metropolitan area.

Historically, it is reminiscent of the hysteria which surrounded the Oklahoma land rush during the last century. But instead of racing to a plot of land on a horse, the new Americans jumped in their cars every Saturday and Sunday to seek out new land.

Now a calm is quickly coming over the land. And many homeowners are going to find themselves in an untenable position.



Not only is the buyer market drying up, but increased gasoline prices have stranded tens of thousands miles away from their jobs.

ECONOMIZING on driving is a losing battle. Prices just keep on rising with no relief in sight.

So many of us were wrong. It isn't the "value" of a house which is important. What is important is the value which we put on the community in which we live.

But instead of emphasizing community value, many of us have opted for property value — a very shaky barometer.

In Garden City, for instance, homeowners complain that a development of a group home for retarded will harm their property values.

In Birmingham, the city is entangled in a legal battle with the federal government over construction of low-income housing. Residents, once again, fear for their property values.

It's a sad commentary on the American way of life when we turn away from the human values of a community for the property values of our homes which are manipulated by forces over which we have little or no control.

eccentricities

Henry Hogan

Here's food for thought

Last weekend we had the family home from near and far and we asked them what they wanted for dinner. If it had been Thanksgiving, turkey would have been served, and ham would have been the regular for Easter. But for a non-holiday dinner it is usually up to the cook.

There were as many suggestions as people, but no one forcefully demanded his or her choice, probably in fear that they would be asked to prepare it.

Finally, someone made the suggestion that everyone prepare a separate course for dinner with an appropriate wine.

We have all heard about progressive dinners where each participant is assigned a course and you travel around the neighborhood having soup here and salad there, and baked lasagna at the house that doesn't have a rug in the dining room.

This was to be different. No one was to be assigned anything. You could bring whatever course you wanted. This meant that we might end up having five entrees or no entrees.

IT GOT TO BE fun because everyone had to do their own shopping and they were very secret about it.

Friday night arrived and so did everybody else with large grocery bags under their arms. The family was expanded slightly because our oldest brought her newly intended and we always have extra friends around at dinner time.

It was awkward at first because people needed preparing room but they didn't want to reveal what they had brought.

The newly intended was the first to offer his contribution. He had cooked shrimp in his apartment the night before, put it on shaved ice with olives and cocktail sauce and served a shrimp cocktail with a California white wine.

There was a pause because it was apparent there were going to be three entrees. Oldest daughter had prepared cheese fondue with little pieces of French bread to dip, so she served it as the second course.

Old Mom had brought large shrimp still in their shells for shrimp scampi and middle child had brought filets to be served with braise sauce, so part of each were frozen and the rest were served as surf and turf.

We had a couple of good French reds and a French white and everything flowed along.

I NEXT contributed a caesar salad which the family expected because that is the extent of my culinary accomplishments.

Middle child's guest provided a glorious cheese cake that she had whipped up in her room at Michigan State. Things sure have changed at college.

The grand finale was the frozen ice cream apples with cordial inside which our youngest and only male heir ordered from Ray's Ice Cream down in Royal Oak.

It was a great experience because everyone went out of their way to do something special and it was amazing that it all went together well.

Everyone enjoyed the evening because they had an opportunity to participate and contribute something significant to the well-being of the group.

