

Midnight conversation reveals another view

She's 22 years old and trying to make up for lost time.

A high school dropout and divorcee, she is going to the Ten Mile Community School at night to get a high school degree. In between she works and takes care of a daughter.

"I just can't believe the way things are over there," she says, referring to her nights in the classroom.

"Anybody can get a diploma. All you have to do is show up for class."

An optimist, she knows she will continue on to college, no matter how difficult the struggle. It's for herself — and her daughter.

She stirs her coffee and gazes into the cup.

"I've got this one teacher who is just unbeliev-

able. The first day of class she told everyone that if they showed up, they would get a 'C.' If you took the tests, you would get an 'A.' Incredibly.

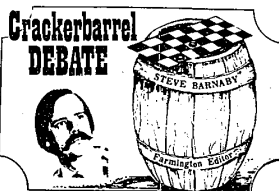
"I didn't believe her at first. But on the first test, three of us showed up, and we all got 'A's.'"

She leaned back in the restaurant booth and lit a cigarette. The words flowed more easily as she relaxed.

"I used to live in Detroit. When I came out here to go to school, I thought it would be a lot harder. But it wasn't."

"Kids out here have a lot of time and money. They don't seem to know what to do with themselves — neither do the parents, or the teachers."

"I read this thing in the paper about humanities. I just can't imagine that — not having humanities."



She lit another cigarette and interrupted her own train of thought by contemplating how she was

going to fit in everything for the week.

"I don't know what I'd do without my parents. I never would be able to go to school and work if they didn't look after my daughter."

A pause, another cup of coffee and she went back to her thoughts on education.

"You know, I want to take a lot of different courses so I can figure out what I want to do when I grow up. But my teachers make everything seem so boring. They really don't seem very interested, themselves."

Another pause. She stood up and put on her coat.

"I wonder what's wrong?"
Grabbing her purse, she walked out the door, got into her car and drove away into the darkness.

from our readers

'Deplorable' education forces teacher to take stand

Editor:

I've been reluctant to write this letter, because I'm not sure I want to see my name in print. In other words, I don't want to make waves.

Maybe this is true of most teachers, and that's why we've done so little talking to date and the education in our system has come to be in such a deplorable state.

I think it's time some of us spoke up and said what's on our minds.

I've lived in Farmington since 1968 and have three children currently attending Farmington Schools, so what I'm about to say isn't only from a teacher's but also from a parent's point of view.

If more parents took more opportunities to observe what goes on in our schools, and how many students literally only spend time there, they would probably all agree with what I have to say.

I'm on the Harrison faculty and was one of the proponents for the additional requirements for education. This decision wasn't made arbitrarily. We did a lot of thinking about students in all areas of study, and at varying levels of ability.

Being a foreign language teacher, I naturally had a foreign language requirement in mind as first priority. But we've been that route in the past, and we found out how frustrated students can become if they can't succeed in a class but nevertheless have to stick with it for two years because it was required.

SO WE ALL agreed that a strict requirement of any one of these subjects—even though in the case of foreign languages it has been recommended by the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and Internal Studies—would not give our students the type of experience we wanted them to have.

However, there are quite a number of students, none of us in languages, or arts or music ever gets a chance to see—period.

In foreign languages for example, there isn't any district-wide required language orientation program.

If you read the proposed schedule for middle school, you will not see foreign languages mentioned at all. So from start to finish, foreign languages have become strictly an interest subject, in a society that needs them so much more than just for pure interest anymore.

We need languages for economic and

for political reasons. Just think of some of the notorious international blunders we've made, and some recently, because the people who represent us are themselves incompetent in foreign languages and because they can't rely on competent American-trained interpreters. There aren't any.

On the economic side, it has been stated that one American in six owes his or her employment to foreign trade. Yet only 2 percent of our high school students nationwide are enrolled in any foreign language classes beyond the second year.

And believe me, it takes more than two years to master a foreign language. Other industrial nations, and many of the third world countries have a percentage close to 100 percent in that same category.

AND IF anyone still pacifies himself with the thought that they're learning English so we don't have to learn their language, well that's the kind of thinking that has gotten this country into the deplorable international situation it's in right now.

So now we language teachers, having no other support for encouraging students to even try a foreign language, decided that by joining together a group of courses that have something in common—name that thing—develop in our students an ability to understand other people, other cultures, their heritage and their accomplishments through art, music, drama and language. A student could quite possibly find a chance to work with some of those subjects early enough, so they could still follow a four-year sequence should they decide to do so.

How many times have first year junior or senior language students told us they wished they had begun their language studies sooner?

By fulfilling a requirement, our upcoming classes will have that opportunity, and a student could quite possibly find an interest he didn't know he had or discover a talent that might otherwise never have surfaced.

How sad for all of us that we're not more persistent in encouraging all our students to develop all possible skills and interests. Specialization will come soon enough in life.

HIGH SCHOOL should still leave some room for trial and experimentation. Yes, the pre-med student might like to take foods or clothing, and the business major should try art or music or a foreign language.

Students have been known to change their minds. One tenth-grader was anxious to give up French after one year—even though she was getting A's. She wanted to take all the possible science courses to prepare for a career in veterinary medicine.

I personally convinced her to keep her options open and continue with French. Now she is in college, majoring in languages.

Some students appreciate the humanities they learned in high school only after they continue on in life. An ex-German student is taking art and music appreciation at Wayne State

to fulfill a humanities requirement for pre-med school.

When I met him recently in the public library, he told me how hard he worked that we studied some music and art in German classes, because otherwise he would feel completely lost in this subject.

But what of those who don't go to college?

SHOULD WE allow them to graduate from our schools without this valuable knowledge of themselves and the world around them?

I read of concerns about stereotyping—not so.

Within the two-credit requirement, the student still has a wide choice of subjects to fit in with his or her interests. He could conceivably take on semester of four different courses and learn something in four areas of humanities.

How can anyone who wishes to encourage the growth and development of our students in all aspects of human endeavor choose to oppose such a humanities requirement?

For the 20 or 25 percent who would take these courses anyway, it would mean no change in the planned course

of studies.

But it would give the other 75 or 80 percent an opportunity to find out that they like something within our offering.

Maybe a parent's suggestion isn't enough. Maybe it's time we made some positive guidelines to help mold all our students into adults who are more aware of the world around them, and more able to understand their neighbors both within and outside our country.

I believe that the two-credit humanities requirement is a step in that direction and can only benefit all students.

MARIA SCHNEIDER
Farmington Hills

Reader is up to eyeballs with 'posturing' editor

Editor:

I have had it up to my eyeballs with the simplistic logic and the self-righteous posturings of Steve Barnaby.

It has never ceased to amaze me that when you give a person a byline, he or she immediately becomes a self-proclaimed expert on almost every subject.

Mr. Barnaby has several times expounded his theory that all the problems of society will be cleared up with an integration forced upon the suburbs by the simple expedient of tackling low-cost housing onto any plans for senior citizens housing.

And anyone who disagrees with this theory is an out-and-out bigot.

May I suggest that Mr. Barnaby might profitably get out of his ivory tower and move around the real world.

I don't know where he lives, but as a fugitive from northwest Detroit, I have seen the deterioration of a good neighborhood when our federal government starts pushing ill-conceived social programs.

My neighborhood in Detroit was gradually integrated peacefully for several years, but fell apart when that magnificent phony, LBJ and his Great Society programs, made it possible for ADC recipients and others with marginal incomes to buy homes with no money down.

In almost every case, such buyers neglected these homes, which became vacant and boarded up within a year.

My neighbors and I all seemed to reach the decision around the same time that suburban life, though more expensive, was the only way to maintain the quality of life which we had

enjoyed for more than 20 years in Detroit.

I knew these neighbors well—good people, broadminded, conscientious and religious. And all of us acted conscientiously and in the best interests of our families.

We didn't need any priests, minister or rabbi—much less a newspaper columnist or editorialist—to hodgepodge our conscience then—nor do we need them now.

Let's get back to the old idea of each

individual examining his own conscience and eliminating his own prejudices before we start preaching to others.

G. ST. GERMAINE,
Farmington

Who's Who explains what's what

Editor:

We have just received a copy of the Feb. 18 edition of the Observer which carried an article entitled "Who's Who Gets Educators' Low Mark." We wish to take this opportunity to respond to the criticism.

The article appears to characterize our program as exploitive because students are invited to purchase our publication and three related award items. To the implication, it is important to know that virtually all major youth organizations offer similar items to their members and most promoting much more comprehensive selections. The National Association of Secondary School Principals was cited in the article as being critical of our program.

The NASSP is the sole sponsor of the National Honor Society and their catalog offers 24 items ranging from pins and charms to blazers and T-shirts. Many state executive directors of the NASSP whom we have met with find it difficult to understand why the NASSP objects to Who's Who publications selling items which represent standard fare for the many not-for-profit organizations which they do approve of.

The article quotes a local principal, James Geiger of Harrison High School as stating, "They just ask for names and sell the books to parents. I don't think there's much discrimination about whom they'd turn away. It's a money-making organization."

Contrary to Mr. Geiger's assumption, all nominators are instructed to select only junior and senior class students with a grade point average of B or better and demonstrated leadership in academics, athletics or extracurricular activities. Vigorous editing is conducted to ascertain that only qualified students are included. In the past three years, over 35,000 students who did not meet our qualifications were not accepted upon review of their biography including several thousand who pur-

chased the publication necessitating the return of over \$168,000 in orders.

Furthermore, in order to provide students with meaningful, national recognition and the opportunity to view the book conveniently and without cost, approximately 15,000 complimentary copies of the book are distributed each year to all participating high schools, and interested colleges and libraries. This is the largest free book program conducted by any publisher in the field.

Surprisingly, the article made no mention of the fact that in addition to providing recognition for students, we also fund one of the largest scholarship programs in the country which distrib-

utes \$50,000 to qualified students each year, fund grants to youth organizations who require financial assistance to conduct their programs on behalf of students (over \$100,000 has been funded since 1975), conduct an annual student opinion poll which is widely covered by all media each year.

We trust the above information will enable Observer readers to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of our programs, procedures and policies.

PAUL C. KROUSE,
Who's Who Publisher,
Northbrook, Illinois



Billboard editorial

Truth, justice and the American way. Superman isn't the only champion of these ideals. Don Schumaker, a student at Lawrence Institute of Technology, has confidence in the American system. And he's willing to champion his cause. Schumaker's special concern is the defense when Eller Outdoor offered free use of a billboard to LIT's students in Free Enterprise organization. Schumaker, a member of the group, submitted the winning entry in the club's competition to find a design for the billboard. The message was placed near Eight Mile and Lahser in Southfield for about two months. Schumaker, a marketing major, will graduate this spring. He plans to become a business owner himself.

Resident opposes sale of school to hospital

Editor:

There is propaganda going around that Edgewood School and its beautiful playground has been sold to Betsford Hospital. Their public relations department has been working overtime with their beautiful pictures, layouts, and meetings. Yes, even telling visitors in the hospital that they have bought the school and its property. Not so.

Do not let any non-profit organization that pays no taxes, with their free money, send your children and future Americans from our school and beautiful playground onto the rugged streets overcome with ruffians, dope peddlers, and prostitutes.

Do not let their tax dollars devalue your property so they can make more tax-free dollars. As sure as the sun rises in the east, they will use every bit of rotten propaganda to achieve their goal and to brainwash certain people in our neighborhood whose own children become school teachers and principals from our very own Edgewood School. Don't let it happen.

Everything is not right in this country, but we are still the best. Our future is our kids. Young people today are the answer to our problems, and not a non-profit organization. If we don't keep our schools open, we won't need any hospitals unless they think doctors are made in the slaughterhouses instead of schools.

ON MAY 12 let your protest be heard of no rezoning of the school property that is now zoned residential. This can be done at City Hall, on Orchard Lake and Eleven Mile roads at 6 p.m.

Let us protest for our young and future Americans. Yes, it takes hard work, dedication, and sometimes sacrifices, but the rewards are great — like knowing that you are doing something for our young Americans. Doing something you believe in. Let's all be heard and protest. The reward will be yours and your children. Don't miss this important evening.

JOHN T. BEHRENS,
Farmington Hills

Liked 'Ice Mom' story

Editor:

As I read Susan Zeitz's article on Ice Company '80 (Southfield Eccentric, April 21) I can't help but remind myself of an army slogan: "Never volunteer."

While the other ice mothers socialize, dress rehearsals can be frantic for a costume chairman. The "crises" are unending. Like when a pastry maid absent-mindedly begins to nibble on her shellacked pastries; a soloist adamantly refuses to be hair-sprayed; a cookie monster with his skates showing whose mom is in Hawaii; and a backward boot cover causes near panic.

Last year I told myself: never again. But how I'd like to make it until the last performance. I will be telling everyone how much it is worth it.

The show, after all, will be a masterpiece, thanks to the efforts of Ron Bassett, Bridget, super volunteer Debbie Potter, and maybe even me. At least that's what I'd like to be thinking next summer when the phone call comes. I'll probably forget all about "never volunteer."

MARLENE WHITE,
Southfield

from our readers

Letters must be original copies and contain the signature and address of the sender. Limit letters to 300 words.