

Commencement: wrong time for an accident

Each year at this time, speakers tell high school graduating classes that "commencement" doesn't mean the end — it's the beginning of adult life, mature commitments, continued learning.

Unfortunately, commencement is the end for some. They will be killed in traffic accidents following parties, or drown during swimming expeditions.

It's unpleasant to think about. It's unpleasant for

us to write about. It's unpleasant for you to remember if it has happened in the past to an 18-year-old who was close to you.

And yet it's predictable each year when it's time to flip the calendar to June.

THERE IS a party — maybe a "senior skip" day or a Friday night.

Someone has a car. Someone else has the beer purchased by an older brother. The stereo is loud, and the mind is numbed.

There is no pattern to who will be fatally injured. It may be an average kid heading for a job in a plant, a scholar bound for MIT, the kid who was something of a troublemaker.

Whoever the victim is, 18 is too young to die.

What can we do about it? There is no magic formula for warning an exuberant young person who has just completed 13 years of rigid, formal schooling to be careful.

Tell them to keep the party small . . . Provide a place at home . . . Tell them stories about other persons in years past whose lives were snuffed out

DROWNINGS occur under a variety of circumstances.

It might be during an impromptu midnight dip, a Sunday water-skiing jaunt, a swim across the lake.

The common element is an act of foolhardiness.

What seems like a short distance turns out to be long for muscles that aren't in shape. The water is deeper than one thinks. It's also colder, tiring the swimmer faster than he realizes. A bit too much beer may help cloud the judgment.

Rarely does the drowning occur inside the roped boundaries of a supervised, formal beach.

Yes, it's that time of year again.

Three cheers for politics

Some folks can't get enough of politics. Others delude themselves by thinking crazy campaign slogans and paraphernalia were invented yesterday.

"Politics, U.S.A.: 1789-1980" at Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, is just the ticket for them. It runs through Labor Day.

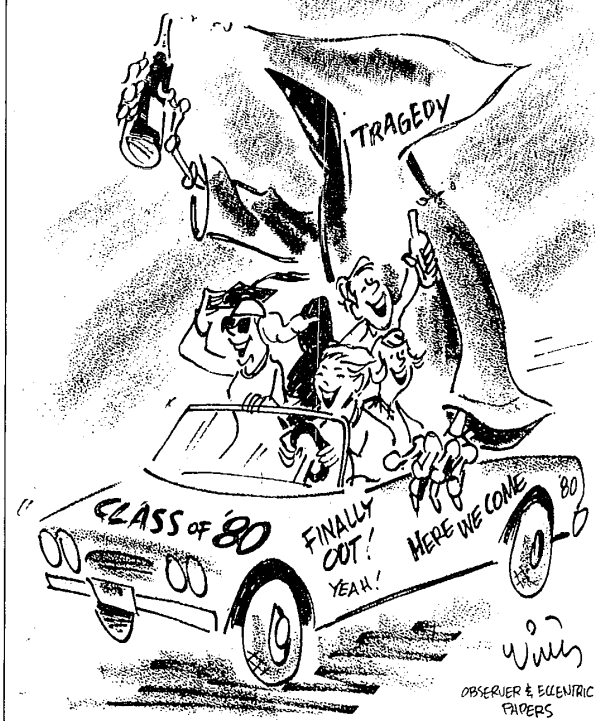
The memorabilia starts with the John Quincy Adams-Andrew Jackson tussle of 1824 (Adams won the first time). It touches on the "Know-Nothings" of the 1850s, the "Farmer Labor" party of the 1920s and George Wallace's American Independent Party of 1968 (was it really 12 years ago?).

There are buttons, banners, capes, caps, hats, papeerweights, walking sticks, portraits, even music of Stephen Foster.

It covers the winners such as Teddy Roosevelt and Abe Lincoln, as well as the losers such as Henry Clay, Theodore Frelinghuysen and John P. St. John.

What was true of America in the early days of the Republic is true today: Politics is our favorite spectator sport. It's deadly serious, and it's rip-snortin' good fun.

The Party-Pooper



The Farmer has hook in Smith-Bullard plan

At the moment, you are probably bewildered by the dozens of tax cut, tax shift and tax reform proposals inflating the air.

In time, much newspaper support will coalesce around the Smith-Bullard plan, I predict.

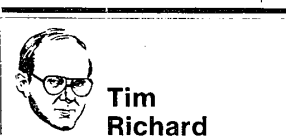
Well, early and loud I will proclaim Smith-Bullard has one rusty, nasty fishhook which flaws it fatally.

To understand the fishhook, you have to understand farmers. Farmers never refer to themselves as farmers. They refer to themselves as The Farmer.

THE FARMER never judges ideas by their overall impact on society. He judges them only by their effect on The Farmer.

I am far from the first to discover that. Sixty years ago, H.L. Mencken, the Baltimore sage, wrote to the effect that the only issue The Farmer is capable of understanding is his own profit.

The Farmer has always been an American patriot and anti-communist — that is, until President Carter sought to cut off grain shipments to the Soviet

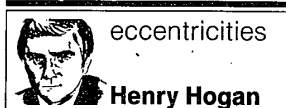


Tim Richard

Union for the sins of Afghanistan. At that point, patriotism and anti-communism were forgotten because The Farmer stood to lose revenue.

Now the UAW leadership is not my favorite bunch of guys, but I respect them for being able to sympathize with and address the problems of other parts of society — migrant laborers, housewives, educators, even small business sometimes.

But in all the farm broadcasts I have heard, in all the farm literature I have read, in all the outstate farm politics I have covered, I have never heard The Farmer express concern for anyone save The Farmer.



eccentricities

Henry Hogan

number and the person answering is so busy that she puts you on "hold" — or "ignore," as we call it. You sit and wait, not knowing whether she'll ever get back to you.

Every once in a while, when you're holding, you hear a mechanical noise and hope you haven't been cut off. Then you hear the dial tone and start all over, only to be put on "ignore" again.

It's a pleasure to fly again, now that air traffic has slowed down. Last year the reservation services of most airlines were so swamped that you could sit on "ignore" for a half-hour, not knowing for sure that you were waiting in line to be served or waiting on a dead line.

With all the frustrations and abuses, the telephone is still the marvel of the era. All you have to do is go to another country and try to use the phone and you'll realize how lucky we are with our telephone system.

But the trouble is that some days it seems that we are too lucky.



discover Michigan

Bill Stockwell

Did you know that there are 1,685 miles of four-lane divided freeways in Michigan with access fully controlled? You can cross the entire 275-mile width of southern Michigan on I-94. The Ohio-to-West freeway, I-75, will take you 395 miles from the Michigan-Ohio border across the Mackinac Straits Bridge and to Sault Ste. Marie.

NOW ABOUT Smith-Bullard. State Rep. Roy Smith is a Republican who hails from Saline. He used to be a township supervisor. He has farms in his district. He knows The Farmer. Rep. Perry Bullard is a Democrat, civil libertarian, lawyer from Ann Arbor. He's extremely bright, foxy Roy Smith put one over on him.

"The proposal would eliminate property taxes for the support of K-12 education," says their news release. "In addition, senior citizens would be exempted from all property taxes on the first \$25,000 of homestead value." So far, OK.

"The money would be made up by an increase in the state income tax of less than 2 percent, and a statewide tax on all property other than homesteads and resident farm property of up to 30.5 mills."

There's the fishhook, the words in italics.

THE IDEA is that city and suburban industries and stores would pay property taxes. These would go into a common pot. Everyone — urban dwellers

and The Farmer — would share them for school funding.

But what is a farm? A farm is in part the residence of The Farmer, and it is in part a food manufacturing plant, with barns, tractors, implements, land, seed, fertilizer and so on.

The Farmer wants our manufacturing facilities taxed but his own manufacturing facilities exempted from taxes.

The idea is not original with Roy Smith. I first heard it nearly 20 years ago, and it may be older than that. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, tiny school districts were consolidating so they could build new high schools and offer more sophisticated programs.

The Farmer didn't like the idea of sharing control of a school district. So he concocted the totally selfish idea of sharing in industrial and commercial property taxes while giving up no taxes and no political control in return.

Nuts to such selfishness, and nuts to the Smith-Bullard plan — at least until that fishhook is removed.

Miami's riot could be ours

Today's Miami could be tomorrow's Detroit. Experts are playing a guessing game. They ask whether the Miami riot is an isolated incident or a precursor of the coming summer.

Optimists say not. They cite numerous examples of conditions changed from 13 years ago when Detroit burned.

Realists are more cautious. They know that too little has changed over the last decade.

Optimists point to Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, who suddenly has become something of a messiah to the suburban mind. Blacks, they believe, wouldn't have the audacity to riot in a city that has progressed under a black mayor's tutelage.

Realists know it to be foolhardy to rely on one man as a safety valve in a pressure cooker situation.

Unemployment in Detroit is once again reaching disastrous levels, and the black community suffers most. For months to come, thousands of blacks will be sitting around in the smoldering summer heat waiting — just waiting for relief.

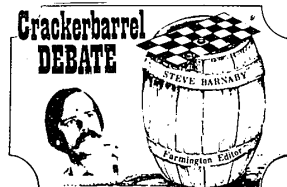
Certainly the overwhelming majority of blacks don't want to see another riot. But when it comes to such decisions, the majority doesn't really have a say.

They didn't 13 years ago, and they don't today. In many ways, the plight of the black community has worsened in the last decade.

IN BETTER TIMES, 1976, only 8.5 percent of the blacks held professional jobs compared to 17 percent for white professionals. In contrast, 27 percent of the blacks held low-paid service jobs, compared to 12 percent of the whites.

The most forbidding of the statistics show that the black percentage of the white wage is less than 59 percent.

Incumbent upon suburban communities and their leaders is to take action now to avoid tragedy later. For if there is another riot, the suburbs will be economically crippled for years to come.



Not only will industry flee from the area, but companies considering relocation to this area must certainly will change their destinations.

Left behind will be thousands unemployed and economically unable to escape the eye of the storm.

While rioting is definitely an unacceptable and morally defunct means to reach a goal, blacks only have to look to recent history to find an emotionally justifiable excuse.

Not until the 1967 riots did the state and federal government react to Detroit ghetto conditions. Yet, before the riots we were assured that black/white relations in the metropolitan area were too good to have a Watts-type riot.

But the years have passed, and dealing with black community problems have become unfashionable and very expensive. The black ghetto continues to grow along with blighted neighborhoods. The dream, and necessity of integration, died on the motel balcony with Martin Luther King Jr.

Let us all be realists today and take the initiative to avoid the riot of tomorrow.

Oh, for office without phone

The electronic marvel of this era that touches more people's lives is one we in America take for granted. It is not television or computers, but the little instrument that practically everyone has — the telephone.

While television has certainly changed people's habits and computers have revolutionized industry, the telephone allows nearly anyone to communicate with everyone else.

That, of course, can be a problem.

I'VE ALWAYS SAID that I'll never consider myself a success until I have an office without a telephone. That way I could get a day's work done without interruption, and it would signify that I had surrounded myself with a competent staff who were able to function totally on their own.

Having the ability to reach practically anyone means others have the ability to reach you, whether they need to or not. Because the telephone is so easy to use and so available, an awful lot of people abuse it.

Children who don't have to pay the bill but have friends in far places can abuse the privilege.

Teenagers extend their social day by communicating for hours with the same people with whom they have spent the day.

Our family years ago ended up adding a separate children's line into the house after I spent many frustrating hours trying to call home and got only busy signals.

Business people abuse the phone. The height of arrogance to me is someone who thinks himself so important that he has to have his secretary place his calls for him. When the secretary reaches the party, the receiver of the call has to hold while the secretary tells her boss she has reached the party.

ANOTHER FRUSTRATION is when you call a