

Peel hasn't retired, he's just changed focus

Every community has its institutions. For the past 30 years, Lee Peel has been one of Farmington's.

The Farmington High School teacher recently decided to hang up his educator's mantle to pursue other interests.

But the thousands of students who have passed through his classroom never will forget the contributions he made to their futures — and to this community.

The rest of us, too, should remember.

By no means is this meant to be Peel's professional obituary. Persons like Peel never retire. They just change their focus and continue on with unbounded energy — a lust for life which few of us possess.

Many know him as the author of "Farmington: A

Pictorial History." Although a valuable and irreplaceable contribution to Farmington's heritage, it is just one of many.

A Peel student in 1963-64, Redford Observer Editor Lynn Orr exemplifies the students who feel they received a better-than-average education because of him.

"He disliked shoddy workmanship. He inspired students to go after quality and to think for themselves," she says.

For years Peel's staunch hand guided the student newspaper. More than half of the Journalism hopefuls in Ms. Orr's class have gone on to get jobs in the craft, she says.

"HE WAS ONE of the best teachers at Farmington High," says Ms. Orr. He was especially terrific

for college prep students."

Peel's English classes were introduced to literature of which other students had to wait until college to be introduced.

"I remember he devoted one segment of our senior English class to oil painting," she says.

A lovable curmudgeon to many, an enlightened eccentric to others, Peel left his mark with many of his students — sometimes literally.

"He had this rubber stamp with the word 'trite.' Sometimes you would get back a paper with 'trite' stamped all over it," Ms. Orr recalls.

Others of us, too, have felt Peel's mark and been better off because of it.

An avid fan of the old Farmington Enterprise Newspaper, Peel was less than overjoyed when it was bought up by the Observer Newspapers. With

typical Peel frankness, he told the readers of his history book how he felt about the acquisition.

"The Farmington Enterprise . . . in 1966 became part of the Observer Newspapers Inc., and, though it has continued the 'Hometown' claim, it really is not."

Many a night this editor has burned the midnight oil trying to show Peel he could be wrong. His outspoken challenge has made this a better community newspaper.

EVERY COMMUNITY should have a Lee Peel. His contributions are too numerous to chronicle in this short space. But on behalf of all of the thousands who have crossed his path and become better persons because of it, we thank him.

STEVE BARNEY



Milliken vs. Headlee — '82 brawl

Ding ding ding ding.

Ladies and gentlemen. In this corner we have conservative Republican Richard Headlee, hero of Michigan tax haters and those who believe in that Mother Goose fairy tale, the American dream.

In the opposing corner is Republican moderate Gov. William Milliken, master of bipartisan coalition politics. His boyish face has made him the public's darling. His bare-knuckles political fighting style has made him governor for 12 years.

And so it will go. No sooner has one political campaign ended than the next one begins. Last week Milliken launched the 1982 political season with a verbal left jab directed at Headlee.

"One of the mistakes I think I made was in appointing Mr. Headlee to the Oakland University board," said Milliken, who is upset with Headlee for supporting the recently defeated Tisch tax proposal.

HEADLEE, WHO has his eye on the governor's chair, countered with a jab of his own.

"You either belong to his Republican fan club or you're out. Well, I don't fit into his club," said the Farmington Hills insurance executive.

No kidding.

In truth, Headlee is the member of only one fan club — his own. He is founder, chief executive officer and public relations spokesman.

His club's first major promotion was to create some two-bit tax proposal. It was incorporated into Michigan's Constitution back in 1978 after a confusing and deceptive public relations campaign which promised the world to property owners but delivered very little.

To reassure voters his heart was in the right spot, Headlee endorsed the irresponsible Tisch proposal this year. No sense in keeping your name out of the political limelight, especially when you have your eye on Lansing's top political job.

Headlee, of course, denies such base desires. After all, his scenario through the years has been to make elected officials look like the bad guys.

MILLIKEN KNOWS better and wants to nip Headlee's political ambitions in the bud. Thus the campaign to discredit him.

Headlee has countered with some baloney about infringement of his first amendment rights because of his recent vote as an Oakland University trustee.

The board majority voted to disavow Tisch. Headlee disavowed the disavowal, claiming an anti-Tisch stand would politicize the OU board.

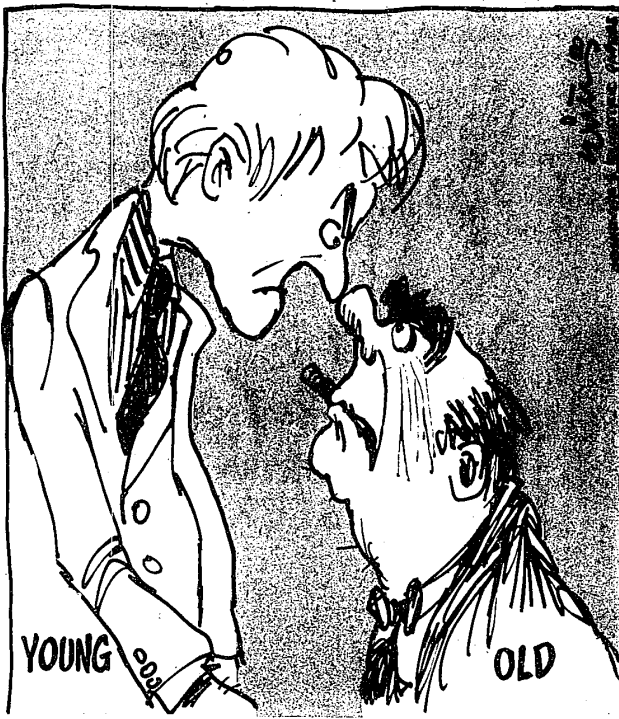
Now don't get me wrong. Headlee's a personable guy. He's even a pretty good businessman, having resurrected the Alexander Hamilton Insurance Co. from economic ruin.

But when it comes to politics, Headlee's words haven't jibed with his actions. Undoubtedly, he will run either for governor or the U.S. Senate in 1982.

First, of course, he will have to find an excuse to remove his cloak of populist piety. I can hear him now.

"The career politicians in this state have acted irresponsibly. Your tax dollar is the milk of the professional politician. I, as a citizen-politician, will save you from these money grubbers."

The words may not be exact, but betcha I'm darned close. Right, Citizen Headlee?



When football was small-time

Each Sunday during the Fall when as many as 80,000 sport fans gather in the Silverdome to watch the Lions do battle, The Stroller can't help recalling the days of Jimmy Conzelman who wrote one of the most unusual chapters in the history of pro football in Detroit.

You may not recall his name. In fact, The Stroller hasn't heard of him for years and doesn't know if he is still among the living. If he is, Jimmy must be laughing as he recalls his career as owner of a team he called the Detroit Panthers. The club played at Navin Field (now Tiger Stadium) before a mere handful of folks on those cold Sunday afternoons.

Conzelman would be smiling because he once sold what is now one of the richest franchises in the National Football League for a mere \$50 and thought he made a good deal.

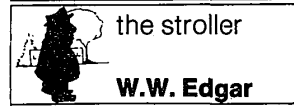
He would be smiling by comparing his experience with that of William Clay Ford, the owner of the Lions who paid \$6 million for the team several years ago. And when Jimmy looked at the figures and saw crowds of 80,000 with approximately \$340,000 taken in each week at the concession stands, he'd break out in a laugh.

TO THOSE WHO don't recall the name Conzelman, he was the star quarterback at St. Louis University a bit more than half a century ago and was rated All-America caliber.

Upon graduation, he turned to pro football, organized a team he called the Panthers, took up residence in Detroit and placed the team in the pro league.

Jimmy was an ambitious fellow. He not only owned the team but played quarterback while serving as coach, general manager and director of publicity.

In these roles he often ventured into the sports room at the Free Press where The Stroller then spent his working hours. A delightful fellow, well met, Jimmy was a good story teller and we always looked forward to his visits. He was always good for a laugh until Sundays. Then he would look over the meager gathering and frown. The few who were there



walked along the sidelines and didn't even go near the seats.

ONE NIGHT as Jimmy was talking of the small attendance at the games, he offered this cure: "I am going to get a good local player and build around him. I think that will help boost the crowds."

It was the year that Tom Edwards, a good tackle, graduated from the University of Michigan. Jimmy sought him and signed him. His hopes now brightened both for himself and the team.

When the next season opened and Edwards was given a place on the front line as a tackle, Jimmy had high hopes. To be sure, the team was stronger and played much better football.

But things didn't work out as expected at the gate.

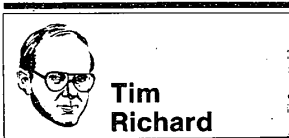
"Our attendance improved," Jimmy always chuckled when relating the story. "We had one more spectator — Tom Edwards' father — and he got in on a pass."

FINALLY, JIMMY could stand it no longer. He offered the team and franchise back to the league for \$50 and was delighted when the offer was accepted.

What is so unusual about the great change that has taken place?

William Clay Ford paid \$6 million for the team that now draws crowds of close to 80,000 at \$10 per person. Of this amount he pays \$1.50 of each admission to the Silverdome and he gets 76 percent of all concessions. He also gets more than \$1 million for television rights.

And just think — that's the franchise that Jimmy Conzelman sold for \$50.



Old vs. young: political war in many fields

The best column I have seen on the 1980 elections in Michigan appeared on our op-ed page Nov. 6. It was by the Rev. Lloyd Buss of Rochester, and you should look it up and re-read it.

He observed that the majority of those over age 62 favored tax plans that would exempt themselves from school taxes. In effect, they wanted to opt out of the system.

And in a series of what-if questions, he asked: "If people over 62 did not want to support schools, would people under 62 want to be excluded from supporting Social Security?"

Buss touched on something that has been bothering me a long time. The conflict in our politics is not so much between Republicans and Democrats, or between developers and environmentalists, as it is between young and old.

THE TISCH proposal, which would have exempted persons over 62 from school property taxes, was just one manifestation of that generational conflict.

Twice in two elections, the voting majority has denied persons under 21 the legal right to drink. In part this may have been due to some honest voters falling for the strange statistics on drinking and driving conjured up by the anti's. A more important reason, I suspect, is a desire by older folks to slap down younger folks.

I suspect the 1976 vote to ban throwaway beer and pop containers was as much an anti-young vote as it was a pro-environment vote. Not all older persons are environmentally clean, and not all young ones are litterbugs, of course, but there was an undeniable relationship between young folks' parties and the incidence of litter the morning afterwards.

THE HINES PARK controversy of the past two years is without question an old vs. young battle.

The efforts of community groups, political leaders and law enforcement officers have been aimed, almost indiscriminately, at hassling the daylights out of the under-25 crowd, whether they were guilty of anything or not. That, at least, was the impression of our Wayne County news staff after interviewing all sides and cutting through the statistical dirt.

A few years ago, we ran a series on crime in which Oakland University sociologist Jesse Pitts observed that it was largely the work of the young. What reformed men who had run afoul of the law was not so much the penal system or preaching but simply adding on a few years and wanting to keep the love of a good woman.

Thus, as I interpret it, the "war on crime" may be another chapter in the battle of old vs. young.

CONGRESSMAN Carl Pursell, re-elected in the 2nd District last week, made an astute observation which I hope he won't mind my quoting in this context.

The two parties in Congress, he said, are not the Republican and Democratic but the older members and the younger members. The older members got locked into their committee work and develop blinders toward large-scale phenomena. Republican Pursell sees himself and a young Democrat like Bill Brodhead as having more in common with each other than with older members of their respective parties.

Finally, I must return to the phenomenon of suburban big-lot zoning, strident opposition to apartments, nearly total lack of mobile home parks and success at pricing young couples out of the housing market.

Buss sees the reason for this antipathy as the failure of young and old to play games together, hence the failure to communicate and to share dreams.

If he is right, then it will take us a full generation to end this battle, even if we reformed the toy catalogs tomorrow.