

## Want to watch a live history lesson?

For a student of local government, the next six months promise to be a fascinating time of historical importance. Mine is a minority view.

"I spoke to classes in the high schools, and they were absolutely bored," said Ethelyn (Lynn) Bankes, whose audiences snored out the majority view.

If Lynn Bankes' name isn't a household word, it's because she is a Wayne County Charter Commission member. A Republican from Livonia, Mrs. Bankes is one of 27 persons who will write a charter of self-government for one of the most populous counties in America.

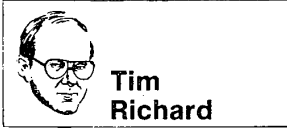
There never has been a county charter commission in Michigan. Cities have drafted and revised their charters by the score, and counties have had that option since 1966, but no other county has ever done it.

Myself, I think it's an exciting prospect. I'm looking forward to seeing the charter commission visit western Wayne County.

But as Lynn Bankes' experience shows, that is a minority view.

NO ONE FROM the outside attended the 1787 U.S. Constitutional Convention, when "Jemmy" Madison, Alec Hamilton, Washington and that crowd held forth. What we know about it comes from Madison's diary.

The Michigan Constitutional Convention of 1961-2 was an education. As a budding political reporter, I covered the campaign to change the ground rules, the campaign to call a con-con, the primary and the general election of delegates, the special Republican pre-convention gathering in St. Joseph's old Whitcomb Hotel, some sessions of the con-con itself



Tim Richard

in the Lansing Civic Center, a public hearing in a Farm Bureau hall on legislative reapportionment, and the campaign to adopt the new constitution.

Besides rewriting the state's basic document — and providing for county home rule — the con-con also spawned a whole new era of political leaders: Glenn Allen, Dick Austin, Garry Brown, Malcolm Dade, Bob Danhof, Tom Downs, Art Elliott, Jack Faxen, Bill Ford, Ed Hutchinson, George Romney, Dick VanDusen, Weldon Yeager, Coleman Young.

Some fascinating characters hammered a million raw ideas into hard proposals, filtered them through committees, voted some up, voted most down and finally shaped the morass into a constitution.

One day Faxen, then a 25-year-old former teacher who had been elected a delegate, took his students on a tour. Students don't get very many field trips like that in a lifetime.

It was stuff they had read about in books, and it was happening in front of their eyes.

A SIMILAR opportunity awaits today's young citizens.

Beginning Jan. 6, the Wayne County Charter Commission will meet at 10 a.m. Tuesdays and at 6 p.m. Thursdays.

Tuesday meetings will be held in a conference room of the Veterans Memorial Building on W. Jefferson in downtown Detroit.

Mrs. Bankes tells me, however, that Thursday meetings will be rotated — one in each of the 27 charter commission districts. She has put in her bid to have one in Livonia's elegant new City Hall.

I presume Tim Manning will seek a site in Redford Township. Justine Barnes will propose one for Garden City or Westland, and Bart Berg will come up with a spot in Plymouth or Canton. That is, I hope they will.

The local politicians, the studious members of the League of Women Voters and just plain citizens will have a chance to promote their favorite theories. The Detroit delegation will learn that civilization doesn't end at Telegraph Road. To be sure, the suburban delegation, as it visits around, may find that the northwest suburbs are not the sole repository of human knowledge.

CAMPAGNING FOR a spot on the charter commission, Mrs. Banks must have found her chief opponent was not the Democratic candidate but public indifference.

With four TV personalities and an environmentalist running for president, it was hard to get folks excited about something as musty, archaic and depressing as county government.

Well, if all goes according to plan, the Wayne County Charter Commission will be coming out to hear us, in the land where you don't have to spend \$2.75 to park. It would be a shame to miss the show.



## Once upon a coaxial cable

Being a first family has its ups and downs. Presently, the Jimmie Carters are mired in the downs with the upcoming Ronnie Reagans on the rise.

I can remember when my family was a first family. Oh, not the one that lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. in the large white house, just the first family with a television.

That is, the first family on the block, in the neighborhood or among our relatives to own one.

It was back in 1948 when television was the newest miracle, the magic box that could bring the world and all its delights into your home at the turn of a switch.

We came to have one of the earlier sets in the fall of 1948. It had been a bad time for the Rose family. My younger and only brother, Gene, 16, was stricken with polio that September.

It was a severe case. Ultimately, it left him with weakness in one leg, but when the illness struck, an iron lung was ominously stationed outside his hospital room door. And it was many weeks until it was taken away.

ONCE I remember walking, several miles to the hospital when he was a little better and waving to him through the window, and then walking back home. Since I was only 17, I was not permitted to visit.

For my parents, it meant hours spent in the hospital, miles of corridors walked and immeasurable worry. But after several weeks of crisis, we knew Gene would be all right. After even more weeks, he came home, to many months of physical therapy.

My father bought the television both as kind of a celebration of Gene's homecoming, and with the thought that it would help pass the hours since he couldn't be too active at first.

That first television set seemed to know it came into our life with a purpose, and it filled that purpose and others for a long time to come.

It was a 12-inch Crosley model that sat on a table.

I was dating Jack then, and he recalls "The thing that was amazing was we were watching an instantaneous spectacle — something somewhere else that we saw as it happened."

Not only did we think it miraculous, everyone did. Every evening, (there wasn't always programming) the house would fill with family, friends and neighbors.

MY COUSIN Ben lived with us, and he had dozens of friends, mostly, like himself, new immigrants who had survived the concentration camps, and they all came.

And my friends, and Gene's, and aunts and uncles and people we hardly knew, who wanted to see television for themselves all came over as well.

The den in our home in northwest Detroit was not large, and I remember some evenings we could have used a shoe horn to fit the people in who wanted to see.

Sometimes, the commercials were as good as the scheduled programs. Since they were all live, advertisers took their chances. Like the roofing company that advertised how easy it was to apply shingles on a roof securely — only to have half a dozen unceremoniously fall off as the announcer watched open-mouthed.

Jack remembers that sometimes people who had never seen television would sit and stare at an ad or test pattern that didn't even move, fascinated.

After several months, and with a lot of hoopla, the coaxial cable was put in place and we got programs like Ed Murrow, Milton Berle, "Meet the Press," sports events, "Broadway Open House" with Dagmar and Jerry Lester, and "Your Hit Parade."

WE NEVER had much trouble with that first black and white Crosley, 12-inch. It took us through television's early days up through the best performances of Pinky Lee, the beginnings of "Disneyland," and up to the era of the big quiz shows like the \$64,000 Question and the subsequent scandals.

We saw television come through with great promise when the Kefauver hearings on crime were televised right from the U.S. Congress and the Army-McCarthy hearings as well.

When Jack and I married in 1949 and moved from my parents house the next year, we took that first television set with us. Though sets were larger with more impressive screens, our Crosley sufficed for us. And we watched reports of Americans boys fighting in Korea in an undeclared war labeled "police action."

When we could afford a new set, we bought it with the idea that "old steady" would go to Ben, newly married, to start him and his bride, Esther, off. And it did. Why not? It worked better than most newer sets.

After Ben used it for several years, he passed it back to Gene, who had a vested interest in the Crosley, if anyone did.

Today, the exceptional home is one without a television, or two or three, all in splendorous color.

We don't even own a Crosley set today, and I wonder why, since that first "old steady" served us so well.

It was fun being a first family all those years ago. After all, even presidential first families owe a lot to television.

## New Year resolutions can break you

Here it is Jan. 5, and I've already broken six New Year's resolutions.

All I had to do was smoke one cigarette to blow the first resolution I make every year. But after all, New Year's is more than blowing horns, wearing funny hats, eating canapes and waking up with a hangover. It's serious business — a new beginning — a second chance.

So in the vein of do what I say, not as I do, here are some resolutions I wish others would keep:

- To all media and business types — Let John Lennon rest in peace.
- To Twiggys types — Don't tell everybody you drink two milkshakes a day and you can't gain weight. You'll be an 80-pounder without a friend in the world.
- To Southfield Mayor Donald Fracassi — Don't be paranoid about talking to old friends who happen to be in cable television. Code of ethics or not, you can still say "Hello."
- To TV commercial writers — If you have any feeling for women's lib, stop ranting about ring around the collar, state cling and Tickle deodorant.



Jackie Klein

● To Detroit Mayor Coleman Young — Stop calling Ronald Reagan "pruneface." A foot in the mouth sure ain't lauded money in the bank.

● To Southfield developers — Refrain from telling residents you're building a \$50 million high-rise complex two blocks away for the good of the community and the tax base.

● To candidates for City Council — Refrain from telling residents you're going to stop developers from building \$50 million high-rise complexes two blocks away. Homeowners don't believe in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves" either.

● To the Southfield City Council — Don't take it

personally when you get bad press or no press at all. Just keep your sense of humor even if you're called "acktsure."

● To Southfield City Administrator Del Borgsdorf — Don't be 100 percent defensive. About 50 percent is par for the course.

● To State Sen. Doug Ross — Keep those legislative bills coming but not so fast. We haven't got time for all those press conferences.

● To President Jimmy Carter — Don't tell folks you can't do anything because you broke your left collarbone. You're leaving yourself wide open for the response, "You've haven't done anything in the last four years."

● To writers and speechmakers — Don't say "hugely unique," "quality of life," "impact on," "viable alternative," "within the parameters" or "I have something to share with you and conceptualize." It means nothing and nobody will know what you mean.

● To the gremlin that gets in my typewriter and makes me goof — "Nappy Yew Hear." Oops, the gremlin did a number on me again.

● Still see people who work in Detroit buying homes in Brighton?

● Allow builders to construct new homes which virtually make air conditioning a necessity because of the lack of windows to open?

● Allow, in this age of solar awareness, builders to construct homes which have no, or very few, windows on the southern side of the house?

● See parking lots aglow with lights even when stores are closed?

● Sponsor road rallies and progressive dinners as a form of entertainment which encourage driving and the waste of gasoline?

I suppose the list of my pet energy peeves could go on and on. I know I'm no energy saint. I have to admit that 68 is about as cool as I can stand it in my own house. But at least I've taken a few steps to cut down on the amount of energy I'm using.

That's more than I can say for some. And that's why it angers me to see places like the Pigeon River become victimized by drilling rigs when the local grocery store can't even put doors on its frozen food cases.

## It's hard to compromise nature's gem

It is with a touch of sadness and anger that I read of the impending drilling for oil and natural gas in the Pigeon River Country State Forest.

I've spent my entire life in the city and have spent almost all my vacations camping, so I've developed a fondness for the great outdoors. The way I see it, cities are great for living and working, but when it comes to vacationing, get me to some natural beauty.

The Pigeon happens to be among my favorites. My husband and I spent part of our honeymoon there. And it was there that I caught my first sight of that majestic beast, the elk.

But being a realist, I know that the energy squeeze is going to make compromisers of most of us. I am grateful that the 10-year battle for drilling in the Pigeon has at least guaranteed some safeguards will be taken to protect the area — safeguards which apparently have not been taken in areas like Kalkaska where residents are complaining of oil wastes seeping into their well water.

But I also can't be heartened by the fact that we're digging into one of the last remaining un-



Marilyn Fitchett

touched wilderness areas in the state based on the idea that it's better to dig for the oil than to try to alter our wasteful ways of consuming energy.

But that's the way it is in our throw-away society.

So we allow and even encourage people to continue using energy as if our energy reserves were a bottomless supply. That's what I find puzzling and even ironic in the whole energy debate.

Do you ever wonder why we:

● Have to wear winter coats in the summer to comfortably shop in supermarkets, especially in the frozen food aisles where there are no doors on the cases to contain the frigid air?

● Have no incentive for apartment dwellers to lower their thermostats when the heat is part of the rent bill?