

Politics: unusually somnolent

AFTER READING a newspaper story which called the race for Wayne County executive "somnolent," I decided that a visit to political pro Joe Schwartz was in order.

Schwartz has been involved in more political races than Harold Stassen and always seems to have his finger on the pulse of the voting public.

I wondered, among other things, how a newspaper which is one of the only means of fanning interest in political races can call a race somnolent just because it and other newspapers have ignored the race.

Schwartz had no trouble with that question, nor with many others that I posed. Following are some of his observations:

Schwartz: "Somnolent, which means sleepy or drowsy, is just another term for boring. It's easy to call almost any race somnolent at this point because in almost every race except Phil Ruppe's the candidates are talking about what they think the issues are. Talking about issues is almost always boring to readers and, therefore, to newspapers."

Q: "What makes Ruppe's race different?"

Schwartz: "Well, here we have a non-issue which becomes a controversy strictly because of a bonehead move by Ruppe's campaign manager. Newspapers find that non-issues involving human error or human folly can become controversies infinitely more interesting than regular run-of-the-mill issues like the rotator state of the economy and budgetary problems. The only thing better than a human error-human folly story is a story on misfeasance, malfeasance or outright cheating, lying and corruption, which we haven't seen any of in any of the races yet. That's why all races except Ruppe's are somnolent."

Q: "But if your theory is correct, that voters find discussion of the issues boring, on what basis do they choose their candidates?"

Schwartz: "A typical voter initially chooses a candidate based on how closely the candidate's appearance and public statements coincide with how the voter thinks a candidate for that particular office should look and sound. After that, the voter tends to see only what he wants to see or hear only what he wants to hear about the candidate. If the candidate is liked, subsequent appearances and statements will invariably fit in with the favorable impression. Vice versa for the unlikely candidate."

Q: "Doesn't that mean that the candidate who is the favorite in the beginning will usually end up being elected no matter what is said between the beginning of an elective race and its end?"

Schwartz: "You are learning."

Q: "If that's the case, why do candidates spend so much time talking about the supposed issues?"

Schwartz: "Because they have to have something to talk about at coffee klatches, dinners meetings and public gatherings. Otherwise, they'd end up standing on a plat-

form staring at each other or talking about each other's personalities and qualifications and they would be accused of running dirty campaigns.

"You'll find, though, that most candidates are getting wise these days, so while they discuss the supposed issues at public meetings they try to get elected by having clever television, radio and newspaper advertisements and pamphlets which concentrate on their images and campaign slogans and on the phony issues."

Q: "What are phony issues?"

Schwartz: "Issues which can be explained in slogans. They are usually things the candidate has no intention of doing anything about, but they are the kinds of things that voters like to hear candidates talk about — law and order, for instance. Politicians who recognize that most voters never tire of hearing about crackdowns on criminals and welfare cheaters try to take advantage of this by implying that their main concern for any office is to get tough with criminals."

Q: "Is that why I see these 'get tough on crime' slogans on the signs of a candidate for district judge, an office which has little to do with major crimes and almost routinely binds over criminals over for trial in Circuit Court?"

Schwartz: "Exactly. This is also why candidates like Brickley espouse FBI backgrounds and make television commercials which involve the candidate slamming a jail cell door shut and talking about mandatory minimum sentences and 8,000 new jail cells. This is why the Wayne County sheriff does little more than talk about his FBI and sheriff's background when discussing a job that has almost nothing to do with crime or police and a lot to do with budgetary problems he helped cause."

Q: "Does this kind of tactic work?"

Schwartz: "Well, it's like the old vaudeville joke about the Yiddish actor who dies in his dressing room. The manager comes out to the audience and says, 'Our star performer has suffered a fatal heart attack.' A lady in the audience yells, 'Give him some chicken soup.' The manager says, 'Lady, he's dead. It wouldn't help.' She says, 'It wouldn't hurt.' In this case being tough on crime never hurts."

Q: "Do you see any surprises in the primaries?"

Schwartz: "No. The somnolent races will get more newspaper coverage, but they won't be any less boring. The favorites will win. The issue that nobody can do anything about — the economy — already has just about dictated who will win in August and November. Unless there is a drastic change in the economy between now and then, the results are predictable."

Q: "Any exceptions?"

Schwartz: "Yes. Any race which becomes less somnolent because of a sudden revelation of human folly or because of mildly plausible charges involving misfeasance, malfeasance or outright cheating, lying and corruption."



Bob Wisler

Beware of safe products

SPAS, HOT TUBS AND whirlpools are increasingly popular for R and R and losing those pinchable inches. But they can be dangerous.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in cooperation with Hydro Air Industries Inc. of Orange, Calif., recently announced a voluntary recall of about 125,000 suction drain cover fittings for the above facilities.

That's because of three incidents in which young girls put their heads under water and their long hair got tangled in the suction drain cover. Two girls drowned and the other was pulled free.

The message from the CPSC is that consumers should immediately stop using their hot tubs, spas and whirlpool and call installers to see if the unit has a defective suction drain cover.

It's strange how the most innocent appearing product which is supposed to provide fun and relaxation can be hazardous and even fatal.

Did you know that children's toy chests with hinged lids are potentially lethal?

According to the CPSC, since 1973 at least 21 deaths and one incident of permanent brain damage were reported from toy chest lids falling on children's heads or necks.

Most victims were between the ages of 10 and 12 months.



Jackie Klein

RELANCE PRODUCTS Corp. of Woonsocket, R.I., in cooperation with CPSC, recently announced a voluntary recall of about 390,000 "Proteco Hold Me Tight" squeeze toys because of the danger of choking and suffocation. Since 1974, about 390,000 of these toys have been sold for \$1.97 each.

Two infants, four and six months old, choked and suffocated when the handle of the squeeze toy lodged in their throats and caused obstruction of the airways, the CPSC says.

The product is an animal-shaped toy with a handle and a built-in squeeze. They look harmless but consumers should take them away from their infants and return them to the store for a full refund, CPSC advises.

If you bought a roof-mounted, power attic ventilator from Sears, Roebuck in 1980 or 1981, stop using it. They've been recalled by Emerson Electric Co. of St. Louis, Mo., in cooperation with CPSC because the motors of the ventilators may overheat and cause rooftop fires.

DID YOU know that 77,000 people a year are injured by coming in contact with the moving blades of power lawn mowers? Under new CPSC standards, every mower will have a "dead man" control, which will cause the blade to stop within three seconds after the user lets go of the handle.

These safety features will increase the cost of mowers between \$20 and \$75. Non-complying mowers produced before June 30 can still be sold until the supply is exhausted.

The moral of the story is that many things you never dreamed of can be dangerous to your health. But don't get nervous and start smoking. The odds are even worse.

Computer isn't purrfect

the stroller

W.W. Edgar

THIS MAY BE the computer age but even the smartest computers don't know all the answers.

The Stroller was recently invited by his friend, a Chevrolet dealer, to bring his car in for a test on a new analytic computer making the rounds.

"It is a chance to learn if there is anything wrong with your car and I think you will enjoy seeing this new equipment work," he said.

We took the car to the dealership and then waited for our turn on this new gadget.

When the time came, the men started placing electric wires in every place that was available. In an instant or two, red lights started to flash as the machine reported on what it had found. Clerks stood by and marked down every signal from the computer, down to the last decimal.

There didn't seem to be much wrong with the car, though The Stroller had known that timing the was a bit off.

ONE BY ONE the items were checked and the men in charge reported there was nothing seriously wrong — just a few little things like

a worn fan belt, weakened shock absorbers and a loose valve cover.

But after all this, the machine refused to give the car the final OK.

"There is a small rattle somewhere," one of the mechanics said, "and we'll find it before we are through."

They checked every part. They went over every movable piece. Finally, one of the experts took the cover off the air filter and started chucking.

"Look at this," he said. "You have had a passenger."

"A passenger?" The Stroller didn't

recall having any known passenger.

"Do you see that cracked corn in there?" the mechanic asked. "That can mean only one thing. A mouse has crawled up in there somehow, took his food with him, and had a grand time. You can tell by the fuzz that's there."

"Your garage must be warm," the mechanic explained. "At any rate, he took the corn and raced up the chute and nestled next to the filter and made a home."

A mouse. It was the one thing the computer couldn't diagnose — a mouse making his home in the filter housing of the old family car.

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