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# Teacher debate is a model for freedom of speech

In case you missed it, some folks in these here parts have taken exception to some of the philosophy spun out of the Crackerbarrel a few issues back.

In that column, it was noted that: a) the recent production of Farmington High School's play was without a teacher; b) it was unfortunate any teacher was unable to find the time to direct the play, and c) a teacher who had a positive influence on a student deserved an accolade.

Interestingly, a lot was read into that column by many readers, as can be seen by the responses to Oral Quarrel and the many letters delivered to this newspaper and printed in previous issues. Two of those letters appear on today's editorial page.

No, no, don't get me wrong. I'm not here to counter all the arguments presented by those many responsible Readers have a right to their opinions without the editor snidely getting in the last word. Of course, neither am I here to recant.

What I would like to talk about is the very positive experience this community has gone through

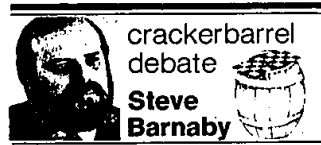
since that column appeared. That's right — positive.

The word "positive" has been bandied about more in the last few weeks than I can remember in my journalistic career. The gist was that by writing about this play incident, the newspaper was somehow presenting a negative that would have been better left unaddressed.

BUT LOOKING beyond the emotional reaction of the actual incident, we must examine the true meaning of education — especially in a country such as ours.

True education is when an issue is examined from every possible angle — no matter how much it hurts somebody's ego. And yes, a lot of egos were bruised over this issue. Yes, mine too. Everybody wants to be loved — even grumpy editors.

But my ego — or a teacher's, administrator's, parent's or student's ego — takes second chair when preserving the society's right to debate an issue fully. And that's exactly what we participated in over the last few weeks — a good, old-fashioned American debate.



The countries are becoming fewer where such debate can take place freely and openly.

Any society that allows less than free speech is one populated by persons deprived of their freedom to learn. Any educational system that tolerates less than open debate is nothing more than a tool for the propaganda of those controlling the schools of that society.

Many persons who wrote disagreed with what they perceived to be my stand. Many claimed that what we had written was less than factual. Some of the letters were, indeed, less than factual.

BUT THAT'S all right. What was important was that many persons in this community participated in a facet of American democracy in which previously they never had taken part — debate.

Throughout the experience, none of us had to fear for retaliation from some force who was armed with weapons or who might send agents in the night to drag us from our homes. Even as I write this, such consequences sound absurd — in America. But in other countries, this very debate would have cost someone a job, a home or life.

A man who spent many of his years as a slave once wrote, "Only the educated are free." But to remain free and educated, we must concentrate on exercising those rights written, so carefully written, into the Constitution — including free speech. Free speech and thought are something for which we all should stand up. Those who lack the courage to exercise those rights or who attempt to stifle others should very simply be ashamed.

None of us who have participated these past weeks need feel ashamed.

## Guest columnist

# Children of Holocaust survivors are a generation severed from family roots

Editor's note: The following is a guest column from Eva Firestone Lipton, West Bloomfield. She belongs to CHiam, a network of children of Holocaust survivors. Lipton, a former teacher at Livonia Clarenceville High School and mother of two children, recently returned from a Holocaust convention in Washington. Here are her thoughts on the conference.

I HAVE JUST returned from three of the most emotionally stirring days I have spent in my life. I believe I have a responsibility to share those days with everyone who did not attend the Holocaust conference.

I should start by telling you that I am the child of Holocaust survivors. My parents are from a Czechoslovakian city near the Carpathian Mountains. I was born in Prague and came to this wonderful country when I was 3.

Although the Holocaust never was discussed, I knew that my parents were a part of it. I knew we were different in that there were no roots remaining in the countries from which we had emigrated.

I never had a grandmother or grandfather, and I missed it so much that I would adopt every gray-haired person to be my grandpa. If, perhaps, a picture of my grandparents had remained, I wouldn't have felt the void so deeply.

All of us who have inherited the legacy of the Holocaust have been permanently severed from our roots. An entire culture, rich in its traditions, had been lost. Most of our parents speak the language of their homes, "Yiddish." A tongue that made it possible for a Jew from any country to communicate now is dying. Those of us who understand the language know what a loss that will be. Never can the beautiful expressions of my grandparents be fully translated into English and still maintain the color and flavor that they have in Yiddish.

FOR THE SECOND generation, we feel the gap very deeply. While at the convention, I heard a young attorney talk about how he had bought an antique pocket watch that he loved to carry everywhere because it reminded him of his grandparents.

An old watch that never had any relationship to his family made a connection for this young man, who also feels the tremendous void.

I know this young man, and many of the others whom I met in Washington, must have felt the same as I did as we arrived to the survivor's village.

I was accompanied by my mother, Charlotte Firestone, and also, I think, I could help but hope they would achieve what it was that they had come to find.

As I watched them, I saw that they were searching the faces of the throngs of people who were assembled there. They were hoping to recognize one face from their memories of 40 years ago, and they were not alone.

Everyone was hoping to do the same.

I SAW MEN with large placards bearing their names, cities of origin, places of internment, etc. People wore T-shirts with their personal information monogrammed in bold letters. There even was a woman with a copy of an old photograph of herself secured to her shirt.

Then there were those who were fortunate enough to find one another. They screamed and cried and laughed and kissed. We all watched them and were happy for them, and then we would again look for names, cities and faces.

On the second day, I remember standing on the steps of the Congress with thousands of people listening to vice president George Bush as he gave us the site of our new memorial. Suddenly a man and woman from Australia approached us because they had heard us speaking Hungarian. They, too, had come from far away to search for a familiar face.

I recognized the look of disappointment on their faces when they realized that we were from different cities. I had seen that look on my mother's and aunt's faces for the past two days. I wanted to cry for them, and myself, because I also wanted to find someone, anyone who could recall one more forgotten tale about my lost family.

DESPITE FINDING no one, we all felt it was important to have come to the convention. There were

so many others who all felt the same, but most of all there was Elie Wiesel. There is no man among us who is more able to express what each of the survivors was feeling.

The pain on his face reflected the feelings of every survivor. The soft tone of his voice, as he echoed the emotions of more than 10,000 people who were gathered to remember, is unforgettable.

I still can hear him as he spoke about how the survivors always would carry with them the scars of the camps. How even a poetic term like "selection" always would convey horror to those who witnessed as the Nazis selected those who would live and those who would die.

As he spoke, I looked at the faces of my aunt and mother, and I could see the tears of pain as they fought forth memories long hidden. Were they thinking about the selections they had seen? About the loss of mother, father, grandparent or child?

I KNEW THAT Wiesel was saying what they had been unable to convey, and he spoke with such emotion that it reached into the heart and soul of every listener. He was feeling with them and talking for them.

It was a very moving experience. During the day, there were many films and panel discussions. The most ironic of all of them were the Nazi hunters and prosecutors, those who have caught Klaus Barbie and prosecuted Valerian Trifa. It was ironic that while thousands of people were searching for a familiar face, the criminals responsible still walk the streets of America and other countries.

Now, as I look back on the three days, I feel sad for my mother and aunt because they found no one and because they had to open old wounds.

I also knew that they had been given a mission. I know that we never must let the world forget, that we must be ever mindful of the sparks of hatred that can cause the destruction of millions of people. And that we never must be so complacent as to take our liberties for granted.

We must guard them, treasure them, so our children never again will go like sheep to the slaughter.



Bob Wisler

# Blanchard should take case to public

THE POPULACE is restless. A rebellious group with strong suburban support called Tired of Taxes has pledged to overthrow the existing state government. New members join in droves.

No one has threatened the governor's life, but if thoughts inspire actions Gov. James Blanchard should fear being clubbed, shot, bung, run over by a truck and thrown over a cliff into a boiling sea of hot tar and chicken feathers.

No one thought the joining of a Democratic governor and a public looking for an end to unemployment, economic decline and state fiscal crises would be without incident. But few thought marriage would be rocky from the start.

The governor was elected by a majority which believed that campaign rhetoric had something to do with state government. Undaunted by the bitter evidence of past examples of campaign cajolery, the majority heard only the magic slogan — "Jobs, jobs, jobs" — and nodded approvingly at the Boy Scout face in the Brooks Brothers suit.

BUT THE BOY who looked like he could not tell a lie lied, the suburban dissidents say. Their lament: "He promised jobs and gave us taxes. He said the state needed the taxes to save it from bankruptcy, and then he used the taxes to increase spending for welfare, employee raises, schools, legislators' salaries, etc., etc., etc."

The Farmington Observer last week asked its readers to phone into a tape recorder to say whether they favored or opposed recalling Blanchard. Of 172 people who took the time to call, 165 said they would like to see the governor recalled, while seven spoke in his favor.

Even given that the Farmington area is Headlee territory and normally Republican, that is a sizeable outpouring of discontent. I have often been buttonholed by people who want to give my ear the benefit of their political reasoning, but never in such numbers, never with such fervor.

BLANCHARD'S FIRST unparadorned sin, say his suburban critics, was to raise the state income tax from 4.6 percent of one's wage to 6.35 percent.

His second was to announce a budget that called for increases in state spending, especially in such areas as social services, the prison system and mental health.

Blanchard will ride out the storm sadder, wiser and certainly less popular. He will not be recalled because of the formidableness of trying to gather 750,000 signatures necessary to order a recall election.

Those who are appalled by government spending will look for a savior among the Republican ranks to run against the "free-spender" next time.

DOES BLANCHARD deserve the gaff? No and yes. He doesn't deserve to be vilified just because he took on the disastrous situation handed him by the forgotten man in this cauldron of discontent, William Nice-Guy Milliken, and then did what he thought had to be kept intact: a state government considerably pared down from its heyday.

He doesn't deserve it for trying to save our colleges and universities, which now have the highest tuitions in the nation and still are losing prestige and professors. He doesn't deserve it for trying to restore some of the lost cuts made to social services recipients.

He does deserve it for not being able to explain to the public how he intends to ensure that the tax money now being extracted from our paychecks will not be wasted on frivolous programs, excessive salaries, people who could work but would rather get assistance, duplicative services, and overlapping and unnecessary college programs. The governor needs to get back on the campaign trail and to take his case to the people if he wants to restore confidence.

## from our readers

# Most teachers do volunteer

To the editor:

I would like to comment on your articles and reader comments on teachers participating in extracurricular activities.

Being involved in many activities at North Farmington High School, I have had many opportunities to work with the faculty in after school hours. Yes, sometimes difficulty does arise in finding chaperones for dances, but many reasons exist for which I would like to explain.

Most of North Farmington faculty are already involved in other extracurricular activities and don't have time to chaperone dances. Only 12 of our 85 faculty members aren't involved in an extracurricular.

Perhaps, Mr. Barnaby, you and your readers don't realize how many activities a high school has. There are 374 sports events in a year alone. On top of that are dances, (we have had ten this year) forensics meets, plays, band and choir concerts. This week there are 35 activities on the school calendar. These activities are supported by not only teachers, but administrators, secretaries and custodians.

Instead, Mr. Barnaby, of always emphasizing the negative about the schools and the teachers, why not print positive information? All the teachers in the Farmington Public Schools recently contributed to an "Emergency Newby Fund," established to aid needy families in the school district. The idea, in fact, came from a North Farmington faculty member. Our faculty has established a faculty enrichment award. This financial scholarship is given to students to pursue educational interests at summer institutes and camps. Two years ago faculty held a variety show, donating the proceeds to senior class scholarships. Last month the faculty challenged our senior class to a racquetball tournament. The faculty lost but has continued the spirit by challenging our class to a volleyball game, with profits going towards scholarships.

Faculty members are working closely with our Boosters Club as well as Goodfellows and other community organizations.

Mr. Barnaby, your paper seems to be so concerned about the welfare of the Farmington Public Schools. If this is true, why in the last two years have I been attending Board of Education meetings has a reporter been present only once — Tuesday April 19, 1983? You, Mr. Barnaby, have been invited for the last two years to our Senior Honors Assembly, an event in which our entire faculty is involved, and have failed to attend.

I would like to challenge you, Mr. Barnaby, to give this extremely positive letter as much publicity as you gave the article about Farmington High School not having a director. Instead of placing this letter on the back page, which you did to the letters from the teachers at Farmington and Mr. Henderson from Warner, place this letter in a location where many readers can see a much more positive and informative view of the Farmington Public Schools.

SUZANNE MILLER, President  
Student Round Table

# A lot of teachers deserve credit

To the editor:

Farmington High School should be truly proud to have a graduate who has enough courage and incentive to return to his alma mater and undertake one of the most demanding and hectic responsibilities, that of directing a high school play.

Various articles and editorials have been printed lately which make the same mistake. These articles all generalize teachers into one category. Of course, there are teachers who do not help with student's extracurricular

activities, but as long as they teach the subjects they were hired to teach and teach that material well, then we, the public, have no right to criticize them. Those special teachers who give much of their free time and experience to students through extracurricular activities are present at Farmington High School. As a general rule, the same teachers are always active and the bulk of extracurricular activities falls on their shoulders. A credit is paid to them when their efforts aren't recognized.

I graduated from Farmington High School last year and am currently attending DePaul University. In the three years I spent at Farmington High School, many wonderful, intelligent and dedicated teachers influenced and touched my mind and helped me to grow as a person.

Perhaps one of the most influential teachers was that of Miss Pieron. Her love for the beauty and understanding of literature has made me appreciate poetry, plays, novels and other such literature. I have found myself more knowledgeable in this field than that of my current classmates. This advantage is greatly due to Miss Pieron.

A grave error is made by saying that Miss Pieron "decided to take a leave of absence from her dramatic duties." She does not have a duty to Farmington High School's theater. The theater department is indebted to her and should thank this lady for.

When I first attended Farmington High there there was virtually no theater department. Thanks to Miss Pieron "Ten Little Indians" was produced my first year at Farmington High. Through this play, I learned invaluable information, not only in theater but also in how to communicate with people. I do not think many people realize what a difficult job directing is. The task involves casting, scenery, costumes, publicity, properties, deadlines and hours of rehearsal. This kind of time commitment and pressure burns out a person very easily. I think we all should commend Miss Pieron for doing the wonderful job she has done in the theater. Perhaps, in the future she will return to the theater. But for the time being let us look at the highly effective job she is doing as a teacher and give her the credit she deserves.

JANE NEUBAUER  
Greenacres, Ind.