

Opinion

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O&E Thursday, November 10, 1983

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Sometimes loving means letting go

A 5-MONTH-OLD baby died in her mother's arms last week from liver failure after spending the last few hours of her life in the sudden glare of publicity.

That day's story told of a Westland couple who chose to let their daughter die rather than suffer through an experimental liver transplant and its painful, doubtful aftermath.

The couple, Erik and Kelly Decker, decided to let nature take its course, whatever that course may be, instead of trying to keep their daughter alive through medical heroics.

The Deckers gave a lot of reasons for their decision. They didn't want to put a daughter they loved through a rare and difficult operation that offered little hope for survival or a normal life. If the daughter, Samantha, did survive, she faced months of hospitalization, up to 50 medications a day to maintain the transplanted liver and maybe even daily sessions on a kidney machine. The doctors put the price tag for saving Samantha's life at \$150,000 or more. The couple's insurance didn't cover the operation.

THE DECKERS said they based their decision on one word — love. They loved their daughter so much they wanted to spare her the pain and horrors of a transplant operation that might not work.

Just hours after the story broke, Samantha died.

For the 5-month-old baby, the painful ordeal was over. For her parents, the pain of losing a daughter they loved will go on and on. Not only are the Deckers suffering the normal grief all parents suffer after losing a child, but two questions will ever haunt them:

Did we do right? Did we have the right to take away our daughter's one chance for life?

ON JULY 11, after a lifetime of fighting an unwinable battle and with no medical miracles ever in sight, my own 18-year-old son died in Children's Hospital. His body, the body of a fragile 9-year-old, had been destroyed by the ravages of heart disease. Only the parent of such a child could understand the words I cried to him as I held his lifeless body. "I'm so happy for you, Jeff."

At last, my son was without pain and free.

ONE WORD was missing from the story about the Deckers. That word is courage.

Samantha's birth brought home to the Deckers a cruel fact every would-be parent fears — some babies get cheated by nature. Sometimes the deformity is



Marie Chestney

life threatening.

It takes real courage for two parents to accept the fact their child got "cheated." But less-than-perfect babies are no less loved, cuddled and cherished. In fact, sometimes they are loved more because their future is so bleak, their needs so much greater and their parents take so little for granted.

Parents of such children desperately want to believe in the miracles of medical science. They want to hear a doctor say those magic words, "We can help."

Parents who don't hear those words feel their child is doubly cheated, once by nature, then by science.

They are powerless to help the child they brought to life and love. They stand helplessly by as a bad heart or kidney or liver does its deadly damage. Most of these parents would gladly give their own organs or their own lives if it would give the child they love a fighting chance.

We revere life, applaud the fighter's spirit and honor heroics. Damn the torpedos and full speed ahead, as the admiral would say. But there are times when torpedos do hit, and the ship is listing and sinking.

It takes courage for an admiral to admit he is whipped.

And it takes courage for a parent to let a small hand go.

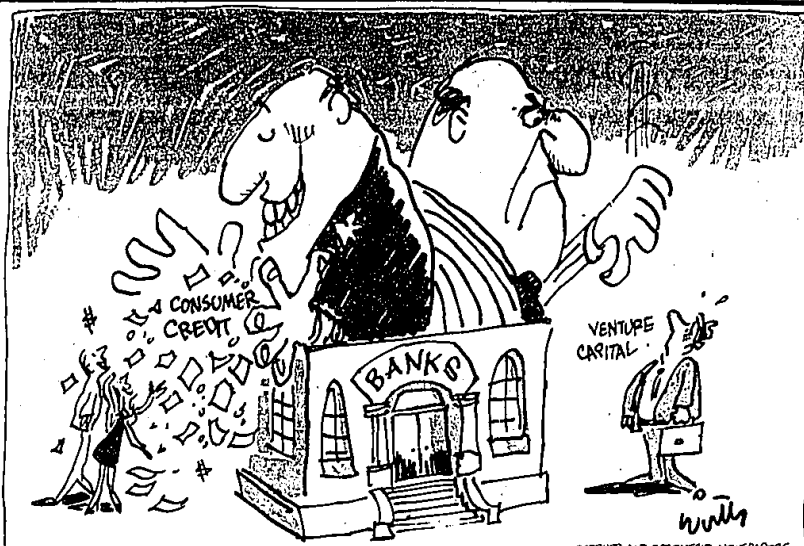
LOVING A CHILD means wanting the best for that child. Parents will take a chance if the chance is offered, if the odds are with them, if a glimmer of hope is seen. No parent wants to see a child die — to be dropped from their life forever — without grasping at a chance for life.

But for some children, there is no fighting chance. The future holds daily doses of death without the blessed relief of death.

Well-meaning friends remind parents of all the miracles being done today by medical science. It takes courage for parents to face the fact that those miracles were not meant for their child.

Or that the price to be paid for one of those miracles is just too great to pay.

Loving a child can also mean letting go. That's the dark side of loving, the side that brings forth tears, anguish, grief.



WALLY

Credit in the wrong places

IS YOUR mail running like mine? This fall I've been receiving a lot of missives that begin like this:

"Did you ever notice how Xtra expenses always seem to crop up this time of year . . . for back-to-school items, preparations for fall and winter, and even a little pre-season holiday shopping like microwave ovens, or home entertainment units such as stereos, video games and computers?"

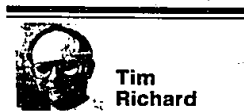
"Now Michigan Bankard has on Xtra credit line to help handle those Xtra expenses today — and pay for them without using or affecting your regular Visa and/or Mastercard revolving credit line. We call this Xtra credit line 'XTRALINE' and it's available to you at over 2,500 merchant locations throughout the state of Michigan."

Or this: "Now, because of your excellent credit record, you are entitled to the prestigious Citicorp Diners Club Card without completing the long, detailed application usually required."

"In fact, you have already been approved for Citicorp Diners Club membership. Just accurately complete, sign and return the enclosed Membership Form, and meet our minimum income requirement, and your Card will automatically be issued."

AND ALL ALONG I thought the United States of America had a capital shortage.

I was under the impression the federal government, with the massive debts that even Ronald Reagan is mak-



Tim Richard

ing more massive, was out there soaking up all the capital.

I had the notion, from Prof. David Brophy at the University of Michigan Business School, that venture capital firms were few and far between in this state, and that a lot of effort was needed to put inventors in touch with investors.

I had the feeling, from Jean Paluzzi and the National Association of Women Business Owners, that loans were tough for female entrepreneurs to get unless they had a husband (preferably) or a male accountant (acceptable) along to talk to the bank officer.

I believed the black businessman, testifying before the state Senate Economic Development Committee, that blacks had a tough time getting financial support. I thought I recollected that blacks wanted a share of Gov. James J. Blanchard's Michigan Strategic Fund funneled to black businesses because it was so difficult for them to get loans.

I had the idea Michigan was known as a capital short state, from one of those innumerable studies of the economy, and that NBD stood for "No Big Deals."

Wow, was I ever wrong.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS are bombarding me with junk mail to urge me to use credit to buy such consumer items as microwave ovens, home entertainment units, stereos, video games and home computers or blow big wads dining out, buying flight insurance and staying in overpriced motels at airports.

Little do they realize my 11-year-old Magnavox just needs a new needle every 10,000 records, my banjo repairs are cheap, and my idea of a luxurious vacation is camping in a tent in the mountains with a noodle to share my sleeping bag on cold nights.

But apparently there are growing numbers of inventors, potential boutique operators and would-be barbecue restaurateurs who would like some kind of backing from their friendly local financial institutions.

Not to mention scads of young couples who would like to buy a house and call it home. If only the interest rates would come down.

One reaches the inescapable conclusion that there is plenty of capital floating around, but financial institutions are offering it to people who don't need it.

Footnote: After writing this, I heard W. Michael Blumenthal, former Treasury secretary and now board chairman at Burroughs Corp., say that the United States is "the most consumption-oriented and least savings-oriented economy in the free world." He is correct, and I think our financial institutions should share part of the blame.

from our readers

Runkel riles a reader

To the editor:

I see flaming red when I read commentary such as that of state School Superintendent Phillip Runkel, and of Senator Jack Faxon, as related in the Farmington Observer on October 31. I don't cotton to the kind of remarks like, "when you ask them to put out the bucks, it doesn't happen," as a condemnation of our taxpayers.

Our money is hard-earned. When we pay it out in taxes for schools we expect to see it used wisely and efficiently, not to be squandered in wasteful and slovenly operation. Show us superior performance and we'll give a superior stipend for support. We don't pay by need, we pay for quality — for dollar-value received.

Over the last thirty years the school systems have garnered more and more of our paychecks. What have we received for the millions of tax dollars? Suspect teaching: sloppy school yards and vandalism; weapons, dope, crime, smoking and fighting on school campuses; teachers' strikes for inflated paychecks; carping over money; and generally ineffective managing of the affairs of education.

What is needed is discipline, discipline, discipline — throughout the entire stratum of the education system. A start would be to have the students police their schoolyards. Don't ask us to smother the problems with money. Money won't solve them. People solve them. Clean up the act and we'll gladly vote all the money that's needed. But we've got to be shown real progress and sound thinking — first!

This may be considered a harsh indictment of the system, and of our society as a whole, but it goes to the core of reluctance to vote freely the kind of millages desired.

Donald J. Selter
Farmington Hills

Police deserve more respect

To the editor:

I am disgusted with the headline of "our" paper on Oct. 17, 1983. For the third time in less than six months you have published the word "COPS" on the front page of the paper. I'm just sorry I didn't cut out the other two articles so that I might refresh your memory. To my way of thinking, "COPS" is low vernacular for members of our local police force; therefore, they should be referred to as police officers. "COPS" is no different than using "NIGGER," "WOP," "POLACK" or "CHINK." Publish those words and the ACLU would be all over you, like glue. Publish "COPS," then wait a month and you'll publish it again! How disrespectful!

As a mother of two elementary school children (9 and 11), I am embarrassed when my children hear about the protectors of our city called the "COPS." I have taught them to use correct and respectful titles for persons involved in their lives, including the police.

If you, Mr. Barnaby, representing the Observer, have a "political" problem with the police force of Farmington/Farmington Hills, I believe you should put your grievance aside in the interest of good, objective news reporting.

So much for my editorial.

Janet W. Friedrich
Farmington

A BATTLE IS being waged now in schools throughout this area. It's not a fight with a football archival or for more tax dollars. But it's a battle for the minds and hearts of 13-year-olds.

I'm talking about the recruiting of eighth graders by private secondary schools. Many outstanding private schools in the Detroit suburbs are competing for those students.

To name just a few, they are: Ladywood in Livonia, Detroit Country Day in Beverly Hills, Rooper in Bloomfield Hills, Detroit Catholic Central in Redford and Our Lady of Mercy in Farmington.

Fall is the peak season for student recruiting. This is the time when parents and children must make a decision about the next four years.

Because there are fewer young people of school age, the competition becomes fiercer.

Tactics in the battle include: slick brochures, open houses at secondary schools, school administrators' visits to eighth-grade classrooms and receptions for prospective students.

It's called the free enterprise system.

AS A PARENT, I am in the midst of evaluating the schools available. It's not easy, since the caliber of the schools is very high.



Nick Sharkey

During the past few weeks, I have been exposed to many different high school sales techniques. They have ranged from the hard sell — "Your child can get an education cheaper at another school, but how can you put a price on a lifetime investment?" to the soft sell — "Select the school where your child will be happiest. If he/she is not happy, then he/she will not succeed."

I've been told to look at facilities — "Our computer center is fully equipped for the high-tech future."

I've heard boasting about curriculum — "We require four years of science and math, which will get your child into a top college."

I've been told about the teachers — "Check out their credentials, and you'll find 85 percent have master's degrees."

SELECTING THE "right" school is no easy task. An open house gives insight into the

school's philosophy and the views of top administrators. A visit to the school during the school day can tell how students respond to their teachers. A high school football game gives an indication of school spirit.

Attracting the parent and student is only the beginning of the courtship. The better secondary schools require entrance examinations. They check the grade school records of prospective students. They get recommendations from eighth-grade teachers.

The best schools turn down many students who apply. But even they must recruit, so they get the top eighth-grade students.

Entrance examinations are usually taken in November. By the end of January, the school lets the student know if he/she is accepted. A few weeks later, the eighth grader must formally commit to the high school.

AS DECISION TIME gets closer, I've finally made up my mind about the school. But I haven't told my son because he's still debating the merits of the finalists. Hopefully, he will come to the same conclusion.

Who will win if we disagree? Don't ask. I'm just glad the first phase of selecting a high school is almost over. I'll worry about that another day.