



Farmington Observer

Volume 95 Number 13

Thursday, November 24, 1983

Farmington, Michigan

142 Pages

Twenty-five cents

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'Day After' poses more questions than answers

Students ask what can be done

By Tom Baer
staff writer

There were snacks available, but no one munched.

"How can you eat after that?" asked Tracey Jones, a Farmington High School senior who had just finished watching "The Day After," a made-for-TV movie showing the hideous aftermath of a nuclear war.

Jones and two classmates, Kris Rogers and Liz Berger, watched the controversial movie last Sunday at the Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills and then talked about it afterward.

The mushroom cloud showed up brilliant pink on millions of television screens — including the one in Room 41 of the Botsford Inn — at 9:11 p.m. last Sunday as ABC-TV made its nuclear apocalypse a video event across the nation.

"The Day After," which attempts to deal with the effect of nuclear war on ordinary citizens, will be known for years to come as the television program which became a news event.

ABC spent a bundle to type it, anti-nuclear advocates applauded it, prominent psychiatrists urged that young children not watch it, and the President of the United States was said to have used his influence to try to have it delayed or altered.

And an estimated 75 million viewers gathered in homes and churches to watch it.

Called the ultimate disaster movie by one critic, the emotionally charged film shows graphic images of death by instantaneous irradiation following a nuclear attack on Kansas City.



Kris Rogers

SURVIVORS — including central character Jason Robards, who plays the chief physician at a university hospital in Lawrence — wander about dazed and horribly burned, left to cope with a world ruled by guns and fear.

The themes of despair and hopelessness run throughout the \$7-million, 2½-hour movie.

"We have to do everything we can to protect ourselves from the fallout," Robards tells a pregnant woman in the chaos of the post-blast hospital.

"What for?" answers the woman and walks away.

In another scene, a farmer says to his wife, "We're lucky to be alive." An-

swers the woman, "We'll see how lucky that is."

Even the doctor, who has deteriorated noticeably, gives up after a few days of struggling with the endless line of casualties and goes home to die.

After the film ended, Berger said, "I've read about nuclear war, but nothing could prepare me for what I saw."

"What bothered me," she added, "was that there was only one church scene, and in that one the pastor was preaching. I thought there would be more people praying."

Said Jones, "Maybe they thought there was nothing left to pray for."

ALL THREE students agreed that no one survived the celluloid nuclear war — even though that wasn't definitely stated in the script.

"They were crying at the end," Rogers said. "There was just nothing left."

In one scene, a survivor tunes a radio to receive an address by the president, who tells what's left of the population that there's a cease-fire — but no surrender — in the war with the Soviet Union.

"What's the rationale for saving the president?" Jones wanted to know afterward. "I mean, if there's nothing left for him to rule over."

Asked if she'd want to survive a nuclear attack like the one depicted in "The Day After," Rogers said, "I'd rather go with the first explosion."

What can be done to avoid such a nuclear disaster?

"Demonstrations aren't going to do much good," guessed Jones.

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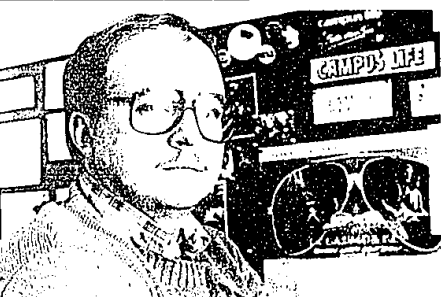


RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Tracey Jones talks about her reaction to "The Day After," a movie that suggested what the world would be like after a nuclear war.



Liz Berger



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Terry Prisk talks about his group, which has come under scrutiny at North Farmington High School where it has been criticized for Christian proselytizing.

Life chief defends group

We were invited

By Tom Baer
staff writer

It's called Campus Life, but it's not on campus — not the campus of North Farmington High School, anyway.

That's what Terry Prisk, who calls himself the "staff coordinator" for Campus Life activities at North, has to say about the controversial social and religious group.

"Something needs to be made clear — we are not on campus," said Prisk, a 29-year-old ordained minister, when asked about the issue of religious groups operating around public schools.

At a recent school board meeting, several parents complained about Campus Life's activities around North Farmington and the support they feel

the group gets from certain teachers and administrators.

But Prisk, who said he is the Director of Ministries for the Youth for Christ program which sponsors Campus Life, said his group stays off school property during school hours.

"I do not want to be on campus during lunch," said Prisk. "That does not mean that I or my staff will not be at football games, or basketball games, or musical or dramatic presentations. We will be at those functions."

Asked what Campus Life is trying to accomplish at North, Prisk said, "We're trying to develop a balanced

philosophy of life — mental, social, physical and spiritual."

"In the society we live in today, there obviously is a seeping away . . . a breaking away . . . of morals and values. Campus Life attempts to put in very strong positive values and morals."

"Campus Life provides certain alternatives to a lot of the trash that goes on in our society today. Kids are going out and getting bombed out of their minds and high."

A RELIGIOUS message comes with the "creative alternatives" and moral values. "Campus Life will speak about a relationship with God," Prisk said.

"We challenge people mentally, socially, physically and spiritually," he added. "We provide social experiences that are second to none."

But some parents have complained that such activities, when carried out or promoted in the public schools, violate the U.S. Constitution, which provides for the separation of church and state.

Prisk disagrees. "I think that the issue of separation of church and state is so fuzzy across the community that everyone is dealing with the way they feel they need to deal with it."

"And I would say that if any school

district were to tell students that they couldn't speak of groups like Campus Life, wear badges, T-shirts, then the students' rights are being violated."

Campus Life is active "in tons of schools" in the Detroit area, according to Prisk. He would not name any others besides North, however.

"I'm not going to mention those names in fear of bringing up issues like this in those schools," he said.

CAMPUS LIFE was started at North four years ago because "parents and students asked for it," according to Prisk.

"They were interested in the positive effect it has on the community and the school district," he said.

Prisk, who graduated from William Tyndale College back when it was known as Detroit Bible College, said he has gotten positive response from teachers and students about his activities at North.

"I will not give the name of the teacher," he said, "but a teacher took me aside and said that there has never been an organization in the school with a more positive influence."

At the board meeting, parent complained that Campus Life has a mailing list with the name of every North Farmington ninth grader on it.

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Botsford leaps zoning hurdle

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

As Farmington Hills officials eased their opposition this week, Botsford General Hospital moved a step closer toward beginning construction on a long-planned \$11 million expansion project.

Following a public hearing Monday, the City Council voted 3-2 Monday to introduce an amendment to the zoning ordinance, allowing Botsford to extend its south tower to a maximum 85 feet high — more than 20 feet taller than current zoning allows. Mayor Fred

Hughes and Councilman Donn Wolf opposed the amendment. Councilwoman Jan Dolan, a Botsford Hospital board member, abstained from discussing and voting on the issue. Council members are expected to adopt the amendment Monday.

In overturning the planning commission's earlier recommended denial of the ordinance amendment, the council's vote, in part, reflected concern about creating a precedent in what has been considered a "low profile community."

"I guess I find that I look at the situation and the existing structure has been in existence for some 30 years," Hughes said. "I hesitate to pass an ordinance that provides an open statement of 85 feet height."

"I do feel reluctant to publicly establish a height limit (beyond what is now allowed)," he added.

HOSPITAL OFFICIALS requested the zoning ordinance amendment after the city's zoning board of appeals earlier this year denied a variance that would have allowed the south tower to match the height of the existing north tower and extend beyond the city's height limit.

Councilman Charles Williams said he would have preferred the ZBA to give Botsford a variance rather than pass-

ing the responsibility to the planning commission and City Council.

"The thing that we have here is that they already have that height (on the north tower)," Williams said, adding there is no need to see the council's action as precedent setting.

Responding to some concern that amending the ordinance specifically for the hospital's benefit would open the door for more high-rise buildings, Councilman Jack Burwell said that while officials can "get philosophical" about the city's low-profile policy, there is no need to be "psychotic" about it.

"We are doing something special," said Councilwoman Judi Sorenen, who made the motion to introduce the ordinance amendment. "That is what we are doing. The hospital does not, I don't believe, have the option of picking up and moving out." Other businesses, she said, do have that option after a disagreement with city officials or policy.

"These are not big butter and egg men coming in from the East to do something to our community," Sorenen said.

Russ Tuttle, Botsford community relations director, said hospital officials are undecided whether construction would begin this season.

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oral quarrel

Tell where you were the day Kennedy died

This week marks the 20th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's death when he was gunned down in Dallas, Texas. For many, the numerous television programs commemorating the tragic event bring back memories of what we were doing when he heard about the shooting.

Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

WHAT WERE YOU DOING WHEN JOHN F. KENNEDY WAS SHOT?

You have until 1 p.m. on Friday to call 477-5498 and give us your answer. You will have 30 seconds to answer the questions. To see what other persons remember about that day, look in Monday's Farmington Observer.

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