

Opinion

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A winner!

Oakland County parks as popular as Tigers

THEY'RE JUST about as popular as the Detroit Tigers, and every season is a winning one. They are the nine Oakland County parks, which in 1984 will draw 1.5 million fans. That's up 400,000 from nine years ago, which means attendance is increasing nearly 50,000 a year.

In comparison, attendance at Tiger games varies from one million to two million a year, depending on whether the baseball club has a winning season. By that measure, Oakland County residents seem to think their park system is a bigger and bigger winner every year.

WE HOPE the county parks will be a winner at the ballot box Aug. 7. That is when the 0.25-mill property tax comes up for renewal.

The ballot proposal, written in legal jargon, says "increase." Actually, the quarter-mill tax has been in existence for 18 years. Voters have faithfully renewed it every five years. The 1980 victory margin was 62 percent, the best record yet and another measure of residents' good feelings about their park system.

To the owner of an \$80,000 market value house assessed at half that amount, a 0.25 mill tax rate means \$10 a year; for a house valued at \$60,000, just \$7.50.

Countywide, that modest rate yields 60 percent, or \$3.7 million, of the parks system's \$6.2 million operating and capital budget. Vehicle entry fees, admissions at the wave action pool and greens fees at the four golf courses provide most of the other \$2.5 million.

COUNTY PARKS provide an intermediate-sized form of recreation between the local community park and the larger, more distant state parks, and within a 30-

to 60-minute drive. They cater to a variety of interests: golf, camping, picnicking, swimming, a wave pool, a waterslide, nature study, winter sports.

For kids in urban areas, there is a traveling recreation program which brings puppet shows, nature programs, sports, roller skating and other forms of fun into the neighborhoods.

And there are bus services for groups, including the handicapped.

In the next few years, no new parks are being planned, but there is a 927-acre Orion Oaks property to be developed. A second wave pool, this one at Red Oaks in Madison Heights, is in the offing. Addison Oaks is due for a 15-acre botanical garden. And Independence Oaks is to be the site of a 4,000-square-foot nature center for environmental education.

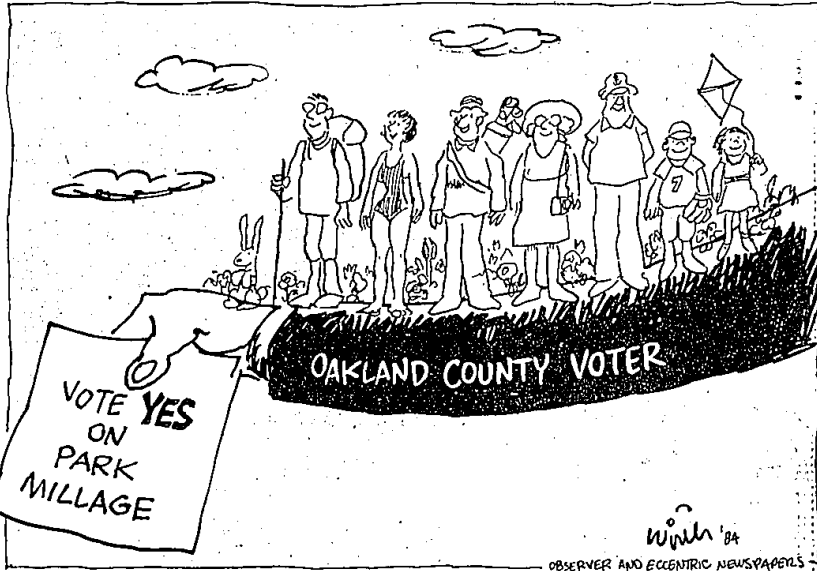
IT'S EASY to see why it is fair to rank Oakland County parks in the same popularity league as the Tigers.

To convince yourself, you could visit one of them. Or you could get a quick, all parks, all seasons tour by visiting the parks photo exhibit, which circulates throughout Oakland County. Here is the schedule for the month:

- July 6-20 — Troy Community Center, 520 W. Big Beaver.
- July 23 to Aug. 3 — Royal Oak YMCA, 1016 W. 11 Mile.
- Also July 23-Aug. 3 — Jewish Community Center, 8800 W. Maple.

While you're at it, you can pick up a brochure about the parks, which circulates throughout Oakland County. You are likely to become an Oakland County parks booster all year long as well as at the Aug. 7 election.

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers



Long political road for women

WOMEN HAVE COME a long way in the 64 years since they gained the right to vote in national elections. The 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution failed, however, to guarantee them the right to equal consideration in campaigns for public office.

Had it done so, there wouldn't be all the hoopla this year over the possible Democratic selection of a woman as a vice presidential candidate.

A woman vice president wouldn't be such an issue today had more women been elected to serve at local levels of government. A look at communities served by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers points out the problem.

IN OAKLAND County, women are beginning to appear in top — though sometimes largely ceremonial — offices. Lathrup Village has its second woman mayor, Dorothy Warren. Birmingham has had several women mayors, including current state Rep. Ruth McNamie and the controversial Dorothy Conrad. Farmington Hills has had three women mayors in the last 10 years.

Rochester has its first woman mayor, Julia Barrett, and Troy without any woman filling a top office in recent memory.

That still leaves Farmington, Southfield, West Bloomfield and Troy without any woman filling a top office in recent memory.

Sandra Armbruster

The situation is far worse in Wayne County, where only Plymouth has had a woman serve as mayor. Mary Childs, one of Plymouth's three women to fill the post, attributes the paucity of women candidates for mayor to lack of time, interest in cultural and other volunteer activities and to the negligible pay for the post.

THE EFFECT OF this is evident as one goes up the scale of office holders. Only two of the 38 Michigan state senators are women, and a meager 14 of the 110 representatives in the state House are women.

Michigan does have a woman, Martha Griffiths, serving as lieutenant governor. But that pales next to the fact that only one state in the country has a woman serving as governor.

According to Time magazine, only 85 U.S. cities with more than 30,000 population are served by women mayors. There are 816 state representatives out of 5,452 and 177 state senators out of 1,986 who

are women. There are only 22 U.S. representatives and two U.S. senators who are women.

IT ISN'T ENOUGH to elect a qualified candidate. The viewpoints of women must be better represented.

"Women must vote and knock down these (divorce court) judges. These people have to learn," Griffiths said in a speech at the Women in Leadership Forum at Oakland University.

Women face other problems. The feminization of poverty isn't just a campaign slogan. When aid to social programs is cut, women are largely the ones to suffer.

What are the chances of getting better representation for women this year?

It's too late to file for races in this year's election, but women can think about future campaigns.

"POLITICS IS a game, not a spectator sport," said Lila Schwartz, president of the West Bloomfield-Farmington League of Women Voters.

Although women comprise a slight majority of the electorate, there are still 41 million nationally who aren't registered to vote. There's still time to do that much this year. Deadline to register for the Aug. 7 primary is Monday.

By exercising the franchise, women take one more step on the long road toward de facto equality.

Legislature gored self on redistricting

THE STATE Supreme Court couldn't have been more disruptive if it had tried. It was a case of the right answer for an almost trivial reason.

Two weeks after filing deadline, the seven justices ruled unanimously that Michigan legislative districts had been drawn up unconstitutionally and that the 1982 districts had to be used.

The decision sent candidates scurrying to their maps, writing out new filing fees checks and throwing away the research they had done on their new districts.

It made elections officials and ballot printers tear their hair. Ditto for newspaper people trying to figure out which districts to cover.

WHAT CAUSED the disruption was an obscure section of the Michigan Constitution governing legislative tactics. It says, "No bill shall be altered or amended on its passage through either house so as to change its original purpose as determined by its total content and not alone by its title."

As state Sen. Robert Geake, R-Northville, explained it, "Legislators have ignored it for years. This time they got caught."

Geake was pleased by the decision, but surprised.

The third-term senator was pleased because his district will continue to be Northville, Plymouth, Canton, Livonia and Redford. The redistricting bill tore Redford and the heart of Livonia from his district and gave him four townships in Washtenaw County and four in Livingston County.

He was surprised because the court dislikes getting into the operations of another branch of government.

THE ORIGINAL House bill amended an obscure section of election law governing Detroit. Geake said, Legislative leaders "potted" the bill — for fun or simply to test its teeth and inserting all new material. This allows them to introduce an essentially new bill after filing deadline and enables them to avoid going through the constitutional process.

"We did that probably 100 times in the 13 years I was in the House," said Tom Ichniowski, former legislative aide to Gov. George Romney. "I can tell you in the Senate gallery last



Tim Richard

week as he was keeping a scorecard of bills for the Michigan Townships Association.

"Someone counted 42 times that the legislature did it recently," Brown went on. A judicial pay measure, increasing the justices' salaries, was passed that way.

Brown recalled the time he allowed one of his pet bills to be gutted for an emergency measure that turned out to be popular. "My name was still on it as sponsor, so I got credit for it," he chuckled.

Brown also recalled how Rep. George Montgomery, D-Detroit, for years chairman of the taxation committee, kept a stock of "vehicle bills" on hand. There would be just a bill number, a title and some boilerplate material that could be stripped in an emergency for an important measure.

THE EFFECT of the high court's decision was to throw out, on mere procedural grounds, the legislature's 1983 attempt to redistrict itself and go back to the 1982 districting plan adopted by the Supreme Court. It's called the "Apoll plan" for Bernard Apoll, the former state elections director who drafted it.

Only the most partisan Democrats defend the legislature's plan, although its districts were more nearly equal in population. To Republicans and impartial observers, that plan was gerrymandering at its most grotesque.

I've already given you the Geake district example. Then there's Marine Barron's 64th House District in Southfield and Lathrup Village. That district would have picked up a couple of precincts in Dearborn under the legislature's plan. And then there's Gary Leach's 65th House District, which would have gone from five precincts in one house to seven in the next.

Who will ride at the legislature's redistricting plan and much better served by the Apoll plan than the Supreme Court's ruling could have been.

Much to do in Kidding Around

DOESN'T IT seem like the kids just got out from summer vacation?

Already in my household I've heard cries of "There's nothing to do." If you have children, you know the refrain.

There's hope for frustrated parents and children. A new publication called Kidding Around is full of ideas for summer activities in the next 10 weeks.

Three suburban mothers who couldn't find any local publication that gave them enough information about children started the magazine. "Several newspapers have a column about children, but we wanted more," publisher Pat Pearl said. "We talked to other mothers, and they felt the same way."

Last December, Kidding Around was launched and was subtitled, "A magazine for, about, and by those of us with kids around."

Pearl runs her own advertising agency in Royal Oak. So she had the magazine's first issue in the summer of 1983. Other principals in the magazine were Mary Lou Robinson, of Birmingham (business manager) and Sandy Lawson, of Ann Arbor (managing editor).

THEir first issue gave several constructive tips on what to do with children during the summer months.

Ray Maloney, former headmaster of Kensington Academy in Bloomfield Hills, suggests how to come up with ideas.



Nick Sharkey

Play "I wish I could," Maloney said. The game goes like this: Mom or Dad begins so the child gets the idea.

"You say something, you've always wanted to do, and then the time to do it is now," Maloney said. "It's a big long walk in the park and you can have a picnic under a big tree."

Maloney said that if you could float around in a hot air balloon, you would really like to go to the moon. "That's what I want to do," he said. "I want to go to the moon."

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• Saturday, July 6 — Art in the Park. Kellogg Park, Plymouth. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
• Tuesday, July 10 — Sounds of a Summer Evening. Kensington Metropolitan. 8 p.m.
• Tuesday, July 10 — Movie, "A Boy, a Dog, and a Fox." "Caterpillar" and "Zax." Troy Public Library. 1:30 p.m. — 2 p.m.
• Thursday, July 12 — "The Emperor's New Clothes" puppet show. Detroit Public Library. 2 p.m.

KIDDING AROUND has a 7,000 circulation. Publisher Pearl hopes the magazine will show a profit after its first year.

All writers work as volunteers. Advertising salesmen are paid commissions but no salaries. The three founders are not paid.

All staffers are female, although there are male writers. "We'd love to have men staffers, but none have volunteered," Pearl said.

The magazine is attractive and the pages well-designed. Articles are stimulating for both parents and children.

"I don't want to sound too kitchy, but we do want to help parents," Pearl said. "For example, we are considering starting a 'Find a Good Baby' column."

For more information, contact Shelding Arnold, 304 B. Washington, Suite 214, Royal Oak, 48067.