

# Opinion

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10(A1F)

O&E Thursday, September 20, 1984

## OU is a local jewel in shadow of Big 3

It started out in 1959 as what former president Donald O'Dowd described as "two forlorn buildings in the middle of a field." But it has grown. It now is a 12,000-student university with a \$43 million operating budget.

Oakland University celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

OU has a rich history. It began in 1957 when Matilda and Alfred G. Wilson donated their 1,400-acre Meadow Brook Farms and \$2 million to Michigan State University for a new university in Oakland County.

The first classes in 1959 had 570 students. Its first budget was less than \$1 million. The university started with 24 faculty members. Today, it has 400 full- and part-time teachers. OU became an independent school in 1970.

**BUT ALONG WITH** the great growth have come problems. Perhaps, the biggest has been that OU has lived in the shadow of the University of Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State.

Let's be honest, few of us aspire to attend or send our children to OU. It doesn't have the prestige of other state schools. OU gets little recognition in sports or academics.

Thus, the young university receives fewer donations. It has a \$1 million endowment as compared to the \$300-400 million for U-M. That means a lot less money to start new programs.

Also, the state's tuition freeze has a more dramatic effect on OU than other universities. The freeze applies to in-state, undergraduate students. OU is mainly a commuter college and has few graduate students.

OU is feeling the financial pinch in that it lacks money to make necessary repairs. For example, improvements are needed in building electrical and pipe work.

**THE UNIVERSITY** is trying several methods to raise more money. One of the most innovative is the start of Oakland Technology Park on OU land in nearby



Nick Sharkey

Auburn Hills. Comerica Bank has already built a building. A four-story high-rise office building is planned next to Comerica.

The technology park helps businesses by making all of the resources of OU available to them. It provides OU with jobs for students and research opportunities.

Although the park will help, money problems have forced OU to limit enrollment to 12,000 students. There's no money to buy the equipment required by more sophisticated programs.

**WHEN MOST OF US** think of OU, we conjure images of pleasant evenings listening to music at the Meadow Brook festival or a tour of Meadow Brook Hall. Few think of a thriving university with 60 undergraduate major fields, 26 master's degrees and three doctorate programs.

That's too bad. Because of OU's 27,000 graduates, 21,831 still live in Michigan, and 70 percent live in the tri-county area.

"We're educating for Michigan," OU president Joseph Champagne said. "Our grads are the backbone of the state. That's a heck of a return on the taxpayers' investment."

The point is, OU is educating persons who live here and will in the future. They will help build southeastern Michigan. This is in contrast to state's more prestigious schools whose graduates flock to other areas of the country.

If you want, run off this Saturday and watch the big football game in Ann Arbor. Or take a day's trip and relax by the Red Cedar River in East Lansing. But don't forget there is an excellent university close to home.

Sometimes it's nice to count our blessings on birthdays.

## Support UF effort

**WHAT DO YOU** do when you have a big job? Ask a busy person to do it. He or she will make time to get it done.

And what do you do when sorely taxed people have already given record amounts to their community? Ask them to dip in again.

That is the wise strategy of the United Foundation board of directors. This week the board approved a 1984 Torch Drive goal of \$50 million, the highest goal ever in the UF's 36-year history.

That ambitious goal is \$5 million more than last year's, or an 11.1-percent increase. And it is \$3.1 million more than the \$46.9 million raised last year.

**THE WORKERS** and companies of metropolitan Detroit will find a way to raise it. We say that confidently, not smugly. Even in deep recessions, folks around here manage to raise money to help others in need.

Elmer W. Johnson, 1984 Torch Drive general chairman, said the goal is realistic and obtainable, but that reaching it will require "substantial increases from all present individual contributors and

## discover Michigan

by Bill Stockwell

**DID YOU** know that injuries in automobile crashes are the leading cause of death in children older than 17? According to the University of Michigan's Highway Safety Research Institute, fewer than one child in 20 involved in automobile crashes was found to be restrained by a seatbelt or child-restraint seat. That should change with the new Michigan law requiring parents to "buckle up your babies."

**DID YOU** know that the Wayne County Road Commission uses 38,000 gallons of white paint and 29,000 gallons of yellow paint a year to mark highway lines? It also uses 100,000 tons of salt to combat the winter's snow and ice while maintaining 1,752 miles of roadway.

corporations and a contribution from those who have not given in the past."

Why does UF need more? "Many people who are still experiencing the effects of long-term unemployment, need Torch Drive services, and the costs of providing these programs have substantially increased," Johnson answered.

The board also approved that total 1985 allocations to Torch Drive-supported organizations be set at \$50 million. This will represent a 6.3-percent increase from the current 1984 level for 130 organizations.

**ONE PERCENT** of the 1984 Torch Drive goal, or \$500,000, will be available for the funding of new agencies. Because of difficult economic conditions during the last four years, UF has had a moratorium on the admission of new agencies. This has not allowed UF to consider funding requests from agencies not previously receiving Torch Drive support.

UF anticipates the moratorium will end early in 1985.

UF first vice chairman Walter J. McCarthy Jr. of Birmingham said that although the economy is improved this year, "we need more people, and for many times have to go to the bottom."

"The achievement of the 1984 Torch Drive goal will allow UF to take a positive step in attempting to meet not only ongoing requests for help, but respond to new and emerging needs of our community as well."

**THIS YEAR'S** fund-raising effort runs through Nov. 8. It raises funds for nearly 11 dozen health and community-service organizations in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

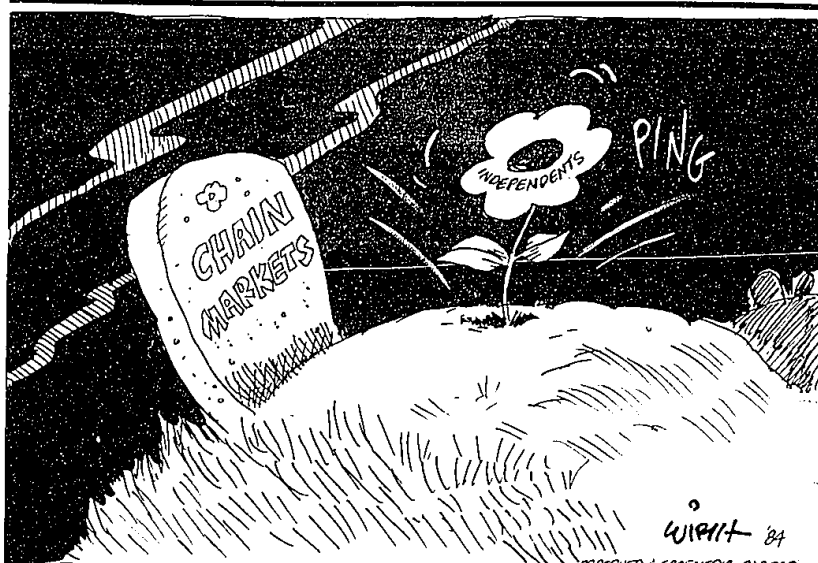
UF recently allocated a special 1984 grant of \$25,000 to the Polson Control Center at Children's Hospital of Michigan.

Family services. Children's services. Scouting. Recreation.

Detroit. Oakland suburbs. Wayne suburbs. Macomb suburbs.

The list of organizations helping people in our neighborhoods seems endless. We trust the good-hearted, good-natured people of this metropolitan area will rise to the task. In fact, no matter what goal is set, people around here seem determined to top it.

—Observer & Eccentric Newspapers



## Squeeze on the big chains

**IF RONALD** Reagan is bending over backwards to help his rich corporate pals, the supermarket chains certainly haven't heard about it.

Packer. Great Scott. Chatham. A&P. Kroger. One by one, the big chains have either folded, gone through financial reorganization under protection of the bankruptcy laws, or closed long lists of stores.

What we have seen in southeastern Michigan in recent weeks is by no means an isolated phenomenon. It's a nationwide development obvious in such older big cities as Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland and Kansas City. So writes John Merwin in the Sept. 24 issue of *Forbes*, a national business biweekly.

The big chains are losing great shares of the market to smaller independents, it seems. You can observe it in your own neighborhood.

**THIS DEVELOPMENT** was foreseen several years ago. I recall a Wall Street Journal article predicting that supermarkets would lose a lot of business to fast-food restaurants.

More families are eating out. Mom is bringing in good pay and may not have time to cook. A single parent of my acquaintance packs her 10-year-old off to school and picks up her breakfast at McDonald's.

The fast-food restaurants deserve credit for good marketing and management,



Tim Richard

holding down costs, providing consistent quality and serving relatively nutritious stuff.

A friend who claims to have done the calculations maintains it costs no more to eat out than to pay for groceries, energy for the stove and energy for heating water for dishes.

**THE FORBES** article concentrates on the competition for the grocery dollar, particularly in big cities of declining population such as our region.

Clearly, management is a factor. A highly motivated independent store manager can respond more quickly to his local population than can a chain manager, who must go by the book.

But the major factor is unions. Despite years of bargaining over concessions, it seems that many unions refuse to believe it's possible to price oneself out of the market. Or perhaps it's better politics to provide top dollar for 100,000 members than more modest wages for 220,000.

There's a war story about an independent store manager who, on a slow day, can tell a \$3.50-an-hour bagger to go back

and stock shelves. At the Safeway store down the block, union rules require that stockers be retail clerks, who make \$9 an hour.

**SENIORITY** IS something of a millstone, particularly for older, more strongly unionized chains.

Let's say a chain closes a number of unprofitable stores. Those employees in the closed store with most seniority "bump" junior employees at other stores. Thus, the wage picture at the surviving stores becomes worse.

One way out of the vicious circle, according to the *Forbes* piece, is to persuade the union to agree that seniority will apply only in a single store, not throughout a region.

When Kroger threatened to abandon metropolitan Detroit if the unions refused concessions, many unionists argued against it, theorizing that many jobs would be lost anyway.

**FORBES** REPORTS that since the beginning of the year, Kroger has closed 108 stores, mostly in the Great Lakes states. It cited high labor costs. The bottom line of that tale:

"While drawing back in the north, however, Kroger is continuing expansion in the South, where labor costs are lower."

In a business where profit is not much more than 1 cent per sales dollar and labor costs take 11 cents per sales dollar, every little bit counts.

## How to forget Miss America

**I HAD LUNCH** with Miss America once. Not the current one, nor her immediate predecessors.

It was the Miss America of some year I can't remember. The name Debbie Bryant sticks with me, however. She was a tall, corn-fed girl from Kansas, very charming, very pretty.

I was invited so I could write a newspaper story about Miss America's visit to Westland. Two other intruders were invited because they had something to do with the event that Miss America was helping to promote. I don't recall the event or much of the conversation.

What I remember most was the baked Alaska that topped off lunch. It was delicious. It remains to this day one of the three or four best desserts I have ever enjoyed.

**IT WASN'T** until the controversy over Vanessa Williams and the Miss America contest that I remembered that lunch.

After thinking about how easily one forgets Miss Americas, I began to wonder: Is anyone as interested in Miss America contests and Vanessa Williams' shenanigans as the news writers, columnists and broadcasters would have us believe?

Or is this another case of the news-entertainment organizations dispensing to the public what they think the public wants to read and hear about?



Bob Wisler

I can understand that people would be interested in the fact that a Miss America posed nude and the photographs were published in one of America's best-selling male fantasy magazines.

**BUT THE** ensuing Vanessa Williams publicity barrage and the concern over the fate of Miss America contests are a bit much. If the contest can survive the loss of Bert Parks, certainly it can get over a Miss America posing in risque photos.

What's the preoccupation with the Vanessa Williams/Miss America story? I suspect it is the kind of thing that people who dispense news-entertainment watch for, the way a man marooned on an island scans the horizon for signs of a ship. It is an issue that really isn't important but one that can be packaged in the gaudy wrapping of sexual misbehavior in the celebrity world.

The coverage continues a trend. The Miss America contest wasn't organized by women to benefit aspiring young contestants. It was organized by men promoting

Atlantic City who knew that photographs of good-looking young women cavorting around in bathing suits in the surf of the Atlantic Ocean would surely capture the attention of newspaper editors across the country and that the editors would print the photographs and that husbands would then turn to wife and say, "Hey Betty, instead of going to the Catskills on our vacation, why don't we go to Atlantic City?" and Betty would think ever so briefly about Miss America and how she would feel being Miss America and would say, "Yes."

**THE CONTEST** is almost an anachronism and survives as a TV event that allows us folks back home to mildly oggle or root for our favorite contestant. Mostly it is a diversion only somewhat more realistic than the Love Boat reruns it competes with. It is also in keeping with the trend of our society to churn out diversions and entertainments that keep us absorbed during our non-working hours.

The eternal quest for no-risk happiness and the abhorrence of thinking about the vexing world problems that we can do nothing about leads us to the point where we are buffered and aspired by cotton-candy entertainment and junk TV, media-type controversies and celebrity scandals, ball games and pennant races.

Maybe even baked Alaska.