

Opinion

Steve Barneby editor/477-5450

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Political 'Oscars' for our leaders

THERE'S NOTHING like the Oscar awards to boost the flagging interests of the movie-going public. The awards garnered by "Amadeus" and director Milos Forman will mean that movie will enjoy an extended run at the box office and a chance to make money.

Every industry has recognized the kind of attention that awards ceremonies can capture. It's about time that our local and state governments realized the benefits.

The right award could mean a renewed sense of community pride, more participation in government, better election turnouts.

Without further ado, I suggest that during the past year, the following could have received awards:

Best actor — Wayne County Executive William Lucas edges Gov. James Blanchard. Blanchard's comeback of the year story — from governor who disappointed thousands by engineering a tax increase to popular governor who now talks about tax cuts — was a strong contender. But the William Lucas performance as the county executive who closed hospitals, fired public officials, laid off workers and paid his attorney fees out of political contributions while remaining cool, calm and collected in his ever-ready blue pinstripe suit won the academy's vote.

Best dramatic production — Wayne County Reform, starring the inimitable William Lucas. Lucas was on stage throughout this two-year production, which saw, among other things, the dismemberment of the Wayne County Road Commission, the selling of Wayne County General Hospital, the opening of a new county jail and the maintenance, once again, of the county parks system.

Best comedy — The People Mover story, which now has had three directors — SEEMA — directors Larry Saiti, Gary Krause and Albert Marlin) and a budget that is topping \$200 million with no end in sight. Despite critical acclaim of The People Mover, it has the potential of being a bigger box office bust than Michael Cimino's "Heaven's Gate."

Best director — Dennis Nystrom, Lucas' chief of staff, finishes miles ahead of GOP bigwig Peter Secchia, who helped direct the Jack Loumsa for Senate fiasco.



Bob Wisler

Nystrom, an Oakland County attorney and former campaign adviser to GOP gubernatorial candidate Richard Headie, did a great behind-the-scenes Svengali. He resurfaced in Lucas being transformed from a lifelong Democrat to a Democrat snubbed by his party leaders, to a GOP-leaning public figure, to an all-but-certain Republican candidate for governor.

Best actress — Supreme Court Judge Dorothy Comstock Riley for playing to the hilt the role of the woman cast aside. Appointed by former governor William Miliken to the state supreme court, she was ousted in a secret vote of fellow justices, ran for office in a move she clearly labeled revenge and ousted one of her former ousters, Thomas Giles Kavanaugh, as the public applauded.

Best supporting actress — Supreme Court Justice Patricia Boyle, who did well as the we-need-more-women-in-government candidate and defeated one-time GOP favorite Robert Griffin for a supreme court seat.

Best supporting actor — Johannes Spreen, former Oakland County Sheriff, who charged through several years as sheriff like a bull in a china shop and then ran for Oakland County Executive against Republican Dan Murphy. Spreen's candidacy made Murphy look like John Wayne. Now Murphy thinks he is John Wayne and is eyeing the governor's chair.

Best cameo appearance in a limited role (tie) — Dennis Sparks, who accepted the job as Garden City city manager, spent a half-day on the job, decided he didn't want to be Garden City manager and left town on a plane that afternoon; and the Toyota parked in Jack Loumsa's driveway in the commercial for U.S. Sen. Carl Levin.

Best screenplay from original material — Dennis Nystrom and William Lucas, for the scenario that has a poor boy from Harlem going to the state capital in Lansing to become the first black Republican governor since Reconstruction days.

readers' forum

We encourage letters on current local topics. Letters must be original copies and contain the signature and address of the sender. Please limit to 300 words.

Library change upsets patron

To the editor:

The Farmington Library System lost something very special recently in the form of a talented, well-trained children's librarian. I am more than a little upset by the apparent eagerness to exchange a human talent for a computerized system. If the two can co-exist, so much the better.

But where are the guitar-toting, singing librarians who wore crazy hats and took extra care to amuse and stir the children's imaginations? Now we can know exactly where any book is and when it will return (if all goes well with the system). But I cannot appreciate this at the price we seem to have paid.

The children's programs have become increasingly self-conscious in offering "objectives" and "appropriate skills" to preschoolers and elementary students. However, the programs three years ago offered all the same learning experiences.

The grace and finesse of a children's program rest in the simplicity and "comfortable" aspects of the program. Like any other finely-tuned talent, the effectiveness of the program is its own best attribute. Don't tell me what they're learning; delight them, and they'll learn.

I have watched these changes over the last three years. When I hear one of the strongest advocates of child-centered library programming has suddenly resigned, I have to question (if the priorities councils and the Farmington Observer will actively examine this situation. Per-

haps the community needs to be consulted.

Pat Frontier
Farmington

Article upsets principal

To the editor:

I am writing in regard to an article which appeared in the sports section of Thursday's March 14, 1985 Farmington Observer, entitled "The party's over for North." The lead sentence of Chris McCosky's article states, "A party, if it's any good, is usually followed by a hangover."

The remark was gratuitous and socially irresponsible. The analogy relating a high school athletic competition with "partying" is a disservice to both the athletes and high school sports.

The inference to youth of such a message is that drinking is not only expected in social activities but that in order to really have fun, it is necessary to overindulge. Consequently, the hangover!

The problems which young people have in learning to cope with peer pressure and abuse of drugs is severe enough without the unsolicited encouragement of substance abuse by misguided adults.

The power and influence of a newspaper writer is considerably more than that of the average citizen. High school athletes have a right to be judged on the basis of their performance alone. One would expect to hear Chris McCosky's statement from a problem drinker or inebriated alcoholic and not a sports writer. Thank You.

Albert Zack, Principal
Franklin High School, Livonia



'—except the handicapped'

GOOD-NATURED ribbing from co-workers began to wear thin soon after an auto accident put my right foot in a cast.

"You wanna race?" queried one. A polite smile hid the exhaustion from energy-consuming preparations for getting showered and dressed, maneuvering into a car, then negotiating the stairway to work.

A STOP at the Lathrup Village Post Office quashed echoes from the jokes. Using railings, someone in a walking cast could climb the stairs. But for someone in a wheelchair, there was no access.

Had we become a government of, by and for the people, except the handicapped?

You bet. A survey of my colleagues turned up post offices in Plymouth, Birmingham and Rochester inaccessible to the handicapped. Postal officials in Lathrup and Southfield say access is hindered by outdated buildings situated on postage stamp-sized lots. Arrangements are made for handicapped persons who contact the post office.

In Rochester, a new post office is being planned, but in Birmingham, a postal employee knew of no plans to make the building accessible.

How could the federal government walk away from its credo that all men are created equal in their civil rights?

WELL, IT CAN'T. A call to the office of U.S. Rep. William D. Ford, whose district includes part of Livonia, Garden City and



Sandra Armbruster

Westland, got an explanation.

In 1968 a congressman found his handicapped constituents had no access to a post office, according to Marilyn McAdam from Ford's office.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 established an architectural/transportation barriers board under the Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) Department.

After a suit was brought against HEW, rules and regulations were finally promulgated. Not only do federal buildings have to comply with standards, so do communities which accept more than \$25,000 in revenue sharing or anyone else with more than \$2,500 in federal contracts. Jurisdiction was turned over to the Justice Department.

THAT'S WHY some local governments are taking their first steps in making buildings barrier free. Those who share federal revenue were to complete a self-evaluation by last October, said Marilyn Gosling, an Oakland County commissioner from Bloomfield Hills. Communities not in compliance have three years to correct the situation.

The number and surveillance of handicapped parking spaces were increased

following a county study, she said.

In Birmingham, where city manager Bob Kenning said "long-range capital plans for 20-25 years" called for barrier-free access, an elevator now is being installed in city hall. Plans also call for an outside chair-lift in the next two years.

But handicapped persons in West Bloomfield will have to give the township notice of when they want to attend meetings, according to Supervisor John Doherty. Then meetings will be moved to a fire hall.

What if disabled individuals need to conduct business in township hall? Doherty said a ramp near the entrance to the police department will allow them into a lobby area, where they will have to phone department personnel to come down to meet them. It will take some modification, Doherty noted, and no timetable has been set for the work.

WHAT ARE HANDICAPPED individuals supposed to do in the meantime? The Rehab Act provides an answer.

"They have the right to petition the (rehab) board to investigate, and if they do have a legitimate complaint, the board can force the building to come into compliance," McAdam said.

"They also have the right to bring a civil suit. As is 'typical, prior to Reagan, (handicapped groups) actively brought suit."

So, barrier-free access to government buildings is proceeding — one slow step at a time.

New trick from an old dog

SOMETIMES I doze off at governmental meetings. Fear not. The important story always gets into your hometown newspaper.

I am able to spring to life at crucial moments — rested, refreshed and ready to take a good set of notes. It's a trick I learned, not from a journalism wizard or a political science savant, but from Beau the Head Poodle.

Beau (1964-80) had his own peculiar ability to spring to life the moment a refrigerator door was opened. After skidding to a halt, he would look up with pleading eyes for a handout.

EVEN IN his teens, when his hearing was half gone, and even after we got a new refrigerator with a magnetic door, Beau still would hear it and come lumbering out.

Finally, I asked him: "How can you hear that refrigerator door, you old mooch?"

"What makes you think I hear it, dumb?" Beau retorted. (Unlike lesser breeds such as Labrador retrievers and schnauzers, poodles can talk if you know how to listen.)

"Actually," Beau went on, "I work by smell, and age hasn't dimmed that sense. I can smell through wooden doors, bags and luggage. I can even smell frozen food."



Tim Richard

It was no idle boast. He once ripped open a satchel containing his dog biscuits during a car trip. His son, The Boomer, once negotiated furniture to claim a steak thawing in the sink.

"YOUR OWN sense of smell is better than you realize," Beau said, getting a little preachy. "In modern civilization, you humans tend to rely too heavily on computers, tape recorders and cameras. You fail to use your natural, animal talents."

"I can even smell baloney — not the food kind but the kind emitted orally by your salesman cousin and some of your fishin' buddies after they've dipped into the corn squeezings," the Head Poodle went on.

I was incredulous. "Do you mean, my little pal, that if I trained my nose, I could detect the odor of conversational baloney?"

"Exactly," Beau said. "Now flick me a hunk of that cheddar cheese."

WELL, I TRIED it. It took six months, but I was able to detect the odor of baloney at governmental meetings and begin reporting and commenting on it accordingly.

After a year, I was able to detect different kinds of baloney at different kinds of governmental meetings:

• At Oakland Community College board of trustees meetings, they seek to stifle the baloney, and it kind of slips out every so often.

• In the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, there is a more moderate gust a couple of times early in the meeting as someone seeks to create an issue.

• At the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, there is a blast of baloney every time the People Mover is on the agenda.

There are many lulls in these meetings, and so it is safe to doze off. But when the issue is big and the baloney starts emanating, my sensitive nose picks it up and jolts me into working condition.

And it was an old dog who taught me that new trick.