

Opinion

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OCC's top job still the new economy

OAKLAND COMMUNITY College trustees must have surprised more than a few people in the outside world when they selected Dr. R. Stephen Nicholson as the new president.

With his background in sociology and the Orient, Nicholson, president of Mount Hood Community College in Oregon, views the world far differently from his predecessor, Robert F. Roelofs.

Roelofs made OCC a prime factor in the Oakland Technology Park that is taking shape in the corridor between Pontiac and Rochester. With his background in engineering and industrial management, Roelofs was in his element dealing with Comerica bank, high-tech firms, Oakland University and county planners in this visionary, job-producing project.

The Governor's Commission on Higher Education has assigned a major responsibility to community colleges in Michigan's economic redevelopment. The community college is seen as the ideal institution to deliver job training.

OCC's own fall semester brochure boasts, in bold green type, that "we make it a point to offer new programs and expand current program options to reflect changing modern technologies." It announces two new career programs: Chemical Technology and Computer Integrated Manufacturing.

grows flowers and writes a bit of verse. He collects Oriental art. He loves his office window view of Mount Hood, which, if you know your volcanic geology, bears more than a passing resemblance to Mount Fujiyama.

Isn't this a startling change of direction for Oakland County, the true managerial "downtown" of southeastern Michigan?

PERHAPS NOT. A new management style is evolving in America, and people like Nicholson may be in its vanguard. There's not much room for the table-pounding, order-issuing boss of yore. In Nicholson's view, a president is powerful because he has more information than anyone else, and information is power.

He isn't afraid of sharing information — hence, of sharing power. He emphasizes respect and trust — between the elected trustees and the president, between the president and the top managers, between managers and staff.

OCC is a decentralized operation. There is a small central office in Bloomfield Hills and four campuses. Each campus has specialized programs and resembles a little college unto itself.

Running such an operation in an era of "shared governance," a concept which has borrowed from the Japanese style, may take exactly the kind of artistry Nicholson has demonstrated at Mount Hood, Las Vegas, suburban Chicago and Lansing community colleges for the past 20 years. It's significant that the faculty-staff committee which assisted the board of trustees in sorting through 58 candidates rated Nicholson as its top choice, too. Hurrah! The board and the people on the line agree.

R. Stephen Nicholson has the ingredients for being a successful president of OCC. We hope he will view his work not as taking OCC in a new direction but as giving a fresh impetus to the economic development work which Robert F. Roelofs thus far has so capably advanced.

ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT — products and jobs for the 21st century, a lesser reliance on the cyclical automobile industry, competing in world markets — clearly is, or ought to be, on the minds of anyone old enough to have lived through the oil crisis of the mid-1970s and depression of 1979-83.

As the choice of Nicholson to head OCC is surprising.

He has been a missionary in Japan. He answers questions on internal strife with Oriental proverbs. His academic work is in cultural anthropology and sociology. He

discover Michigan

Michigan entered the Union in 1837 becoming the 26th state. Michigan might have become a state earlier if the territorial officials hadn't been embroiled in a dispute with Ohio over a strip of land containing Toledo.

Territory officials led by Stevens T. Mason decided to force the union to accept Michigan as a state despite the "Toledo War" and took all the steps necessary for statehood, including electing officials. Mason, who had been acting governor of the territory in 1831, '32, '33 and '34, became governor of the "state" in 1835 at 24 years of age and served until 1840.

Michigan relinquished claim to the Toledo Strip and received the western half of the Upper Peninsula in compensation in 1836. The compromise allowed Michigan to enter the union in 1837.

Michigan also grew in 1838 when the native Indians ceded lands in the northern and western parts of the Lower Peninsula and in the eastern half of the Upper Peninsula to the territory.

A penny post card now costs 14 cents

ONE OF the most fascinating things that has happened as the years pass along is the change in the money of the good old U.S.A.

Remember the penny post cards? Well, it will cost you 14 cents now to mail a card to your next-door neighbor.

Where we were accustomed to two-cent stamps for mail to any part of the country, today you'll have to pay 22 cents, and if your mail is slightly over an ounce, it will cost you twice as much.

By the same token, there was a time when air mail to anyplace was 10 cents. Now the lowest rate is 20 cents, and it gets higher with almost every passing day.

For years The Stroller paid only a few dollars to have his hair cut. Now, with a lot of the hair gone, he pays \$7 on a week-day and \$8 on Saturday.

It seems almost unbelievable that the value of our money has changed so much.

YEARS AGO when The Stroller left his home in the Pennsylvania Dutch country to start his career on a nationally known newspaper, he was delighted to be paid \$45 for a six-day week. Today it costs him almost that much to have a schoolboy cut the lawn. Even trimming costs a bit extra.

It seems almost like a joke now when he recalls purchasing his first automobile. Through the kindness of an old friend, Jack Adams, then boss of the Detroit Red Wings, The Stroller was hired as official scorekeeper.

The rate of pay was \$25 a game. When asked if he wanted to be paid after every game or at the end of the season, he chose the end of the season.

When that day came along, he had scored 30 games and got a check for \$750. It was like a gold mine to him. The first

the stroller
W.W.
Edgar

thing he did was to call the automotive editor of the paper and ask him to get a Model A Ford.

It cost less than \$900. Imagine that today.

On another occasion, he earned \$75 for doing a special job. And with that money, he and his bride purchased two acres for his home and grounds in Livonia. He may never have had a home of his own if the price had been any higher.

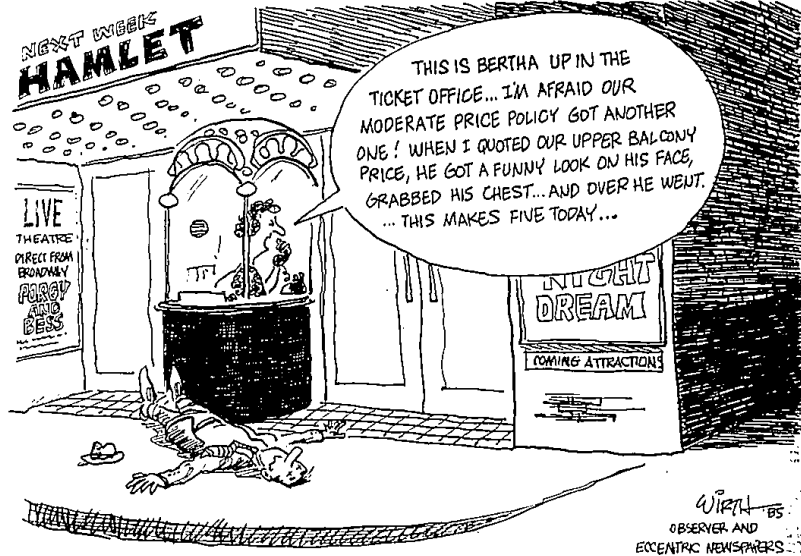
The Stroller almost choked the other evening when he entered one of our restaurants and noticed a special menu pointing to homemade strawberry pie for \$1.25 a slice.

Egad, he said to himself. When we had our lunch counter back home, the price was a nickel. And if you bought the whole pie, it was only 15 cents. We used to deliver them for a quarter.

PEOPLE WOULD look at you with a weird glance if you told them you could purchase a suit of clothes for \$15. Yet that's all The Stroller paid for years when the Scotch Woolen Mill store was on Cadillac Square in downtown Detroit.

Today you'd be lucky to purchase a belt for that amount. And an automobile — even the cheapest — would set you back a year's salary.

Fascinating and surprising. And it might be getting more fascinating with each passing day.



The theater gets narrow

UP, UP went the ticket prices. Up, up went the demands for donations. Finally, Detroit and the Metropolitan Opera ended their relationship. The Met won't return to the Masonic Auditorium next year.

The story is far from an isolated one. It seems that the live theater is pricing itself out of the market, just like the gas-guzzling dinosaurs of the American auto industry.

For support of this notion, we can turn to one of the University of Michigan's most famous sons, playwright Arthur Miller, author of "Death of a Salesman," "The Crucible," "All My Sons" and others.

MILLER SAYS high ticket prices are keeping Americans out of theaters and new ideas out of plays.

Interviewed for the Michigan Quarterly Review, the U-M cultural and literary journal, Miller said: "I know when I go to Minneapolis or Dayton, there's a different atmosphere between the play and the people, because it costs next to nothing to get in — at least when compared to New York prices. A much wider group of people is in the theater, and I find this very stimulating."

Shakespeare, he noted, had to address a wide audience — from the nobility to the "groundlings," the non-literate folks who stood on the ground and howled at his comic scenes.



Tim Richard

EVER SINCE Shakespeare's day, the audience for live theater has become narrower and narrower. At today's \$40 ticket prices, the audience is pretty narrow, Miller contended.

Miller's ideal audience would be a national political convention. "You know: real ugly toughs from Chicago, professors from Massachusetts, Southern crackers from Georgia, Alabama. I could talk to those people. But I can't get 'em!"

"I was a delegate to the 1968 Democratic convention, and there was the American people. That's the audience I wish I had. They're not in my theater. And if they ever get into the theater, you would have something. You would have fever!"

(Myself, I would quibble with Miller over whether a Democratic convention is a cross-section of "the American people.") Michigan Democratic delegates come from the ranks of non-profit organizations — government, politics, unions, churches, law, social agencies. Practically none work for commerce or industry.)

With this amendment, Miller's point seems valid: When your audience has to pay \$40 a seat, the audience becomes pretty narrow, the playwright restricted.

ORIGINAL DRAMA isn't dead, at least in these suburbs.

I wonder what Miller would say about the "The Trial of Mary Lincoln," the play our one-time theater critic Bob Wall wrote about the Emancipator's widow. We history buffs loved it when it was produced in Dearborn a few years back.

I wonder if Miller would be impressed by the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford's current production of "Friends in Dark Places," playing through Aug. 10. The playwright is Janet Mackie Hackel, 26, who won a Hopwood award at the University of Michigan for it — the same award Miller himself won four decades ago.

Ticket prices for TGLR's performance: a democratic \$3. I know Miller would like that.

Theater groups in Franklin and Farmington have produced original dramas; at pretty reasonable prices. Would Miller find the playwrights restricted by the audiences in these suburbs?

You concentrate on ideas more when you see live theater than when you idly twist the TV dial. American society is the loser if the theater dries up as a source of ideas.

Earth issues: bombs, baseball

REPORT FROM Earth: Greetings to my fellow beings. I have been able to land unnoticed on this planet and dwell in a place called Michigan in the United States of America. I am voracious.

I am voracious in reading and watching on the television box all reports about this planet in hopes of learning more about its people. I think I have learned the native language quite good and will communicate in it to avoid detection.

As you know from air wave monitors, the chief bureaucrat of this country has had recent illnesses and is recovering. His assistants say his illnesses will not affect his ability to direct all the bureaus.

The people of this country have two concerns. One is whether this country or any other country will drop a bomb similar to one dropped exactly 40 years ago. That bomb destroyed a population center. Some people fear that a country will soon think of dropping even more powerful bombs and destroying even larger population centers.

THE OTHER issue is whether there will be a continuation of what television box reporters call the "grand old game" of baseball.

It has been difficult to determine which is the more important issue. Most reports devote more attention to the grand old game issue. But people who are considered experts on government say the more



Bob Wisler

important issue is preventing more bomb droppings.

Judging by the natives' reactions, though, it seems that the grand old game of baseball is more important. A person who lives in the next dwelling unit says that the media (the television box reports and the news pamphlets) "run all that junk about the atomic bomb for several days, and then you won't hear about it again. People don't want to be reminded about wars and what might happen in the future."

His words may be true. I have tried to strike up conversation with natives about the possibility of bombs being dropped, but no one wishes to speak of it. On the other hand, everyone in my dwelling unit violently wishes to discuss the continuation of the grand old game of baseball.

It is difficult to understand. Dropping of bombs seemingly would lead to mass destruction of people and countries, but temporary cessation of the grand old

game of baseball would seemingly affect only a small segment of the population.

Those affected would be a group of less than 30 persons of substantial wealth who own what are called baseball teams and a group of several hundred persons who play the grand old game of baseball. The two groups disagree over dividing money that is earned from staging baseball games. Watching baseball games is considered a form of relaxation by most natives.

THE PLAYERS on average earn more than 98 percent of the native population but say they need more money. The owners have even more money than the players but say they can't afford to give up any more.

The natives who are neither owners nor players do not seem to care what side gets more money. They want no disruption in the continuation of the grand old game.

The person in the next dwelling unit says the people can live with the threat of destruction by bombs, but only if there is baseball. In his words: "How are you going to be able to stand life if you don't have a baseball team to root for?"

I am still in process of learning about life on this planet.