

# Opinion

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RANDY DORST/staff photographer

During a retirement open house Dec. 15 in the Farmington Community Center, outgoing superintendent Lew Schulman (right) is greeted by Longacre Elementary physical education teacher Ann Marie Sopha.

## Thanks, Lew

You've left quite a mark!

A monthly peek into Bob Sklar's notebook —

**EVERY** ONCE in a while, a professional public servant telling in the shadows of elected leadership makes an indelible community imprint.

Lew Schulman is such a person. At a time when more and more public officials are falling from public favor, Schulman — Farmington Public Schools superintendent for the past nine years — stepped down Dec. 31 because he wanted to, not because he had to.

A district employee since 1969, Schulman, 65, held the top post during a hectic period of school closings and teacher layoffs. But those who knew him well say he always kept a finger on the community's pulse — and its needs. His leadership record is exemplary.

Before he suggested a new program or policy for adoption, it was clear Schulman had done his homework, and had done it well. A paper shuffler, he wasn't.

He's a man who wielded power, but who never forgot that other opinions matter, too. He encouraged new ideas and fresh philosophies.

Honesty, integrity, dignity — that's Lew Schulman.

**DESPITE** TRIPLE coronary bypass surgery in 1984, and even though he had been an educator for 45 years, Schulman never lost his indomitable spirit and youthful attitude. No fence sitter, he tackled issues head on, no matter how prickly they were. He didn't cling to tradition for tradition's sake.

As school chief, Schulman was known as easygoing but fair, sensitive but streetwise. He set an upbeat tone for the district. Putting others on the defensive wasn't his style.

Farmington Board of Education President Susan Rennels credits Schulman with fostering "a cohesiveness and a sense of togetherness" among teachers, parents and students.

She said parents who "called in with a concern found a man who genuinely cared about what they had to say."

One of Schulman's biggest boosters is an unlikely ally.

Says Zan Alley, who as Farmington Coordinating Council executive director represents 1,250 of the district's union employees: "He's the finest superintendent I ever dealt with. He's a humanist who provided the type of leadership that always put individuals above the bureaucracy."

## We welcome your views

**READERS** ULTIMATELY determine the quality of a newspaper — especially one heavily colored with community news.

We firmly believe that is how it should be. So if you'd like to share your opinions, write us.

We reserve the right to edit and condense letters. In most cases, letters should be limited to 300 words.

Letters must be original copies. Carbons, reprints and photocopies will be dis-



Bob Sklar

**THIS** PAST fall, when the district increased its classroom teaching staff for the first time in a decade, Schulman made it a point to visit each school and greet every new teacher.

"That's practically unheard of," Alley said. "But that's Lew's style. And that's why I've been the envy of my colleagues within the Michigan Education Association. No one's irreplaceable. But Lew comes darn close."

Although Schulman didn't sit at the bargaining table, his presence was felt. His knack as a problem solver was a major reason why there seldom was the threat of a strike, Alley added.

As she put it, "Lew was always willing to talk. And when you talk, you don't have labor problems. Lew spread that spirit throughout the district. The school board shared that spirit."

Schulman, Harrison High's first principal, also gained a reputation as a fine builder of curriculum. Farmington Observer reporter Joanne Maliszewski said she "never doubted that Lew definitely believed in serving students in all income stratas and backgrounds — not just those kids who are headliners. For example, he had a deep commitment to vocational education."

**ALLEY** ALSO pointed to Schulman's self-confidence: "When the National Commission on Excellence in Education report ('A Nation At Risk') came out, other districts jumped to change their curriculum and toughen graduation requirements. But Lew said, 'We're not scared. Let's analyze what we've got first.' He wasn't the kneejerk type."

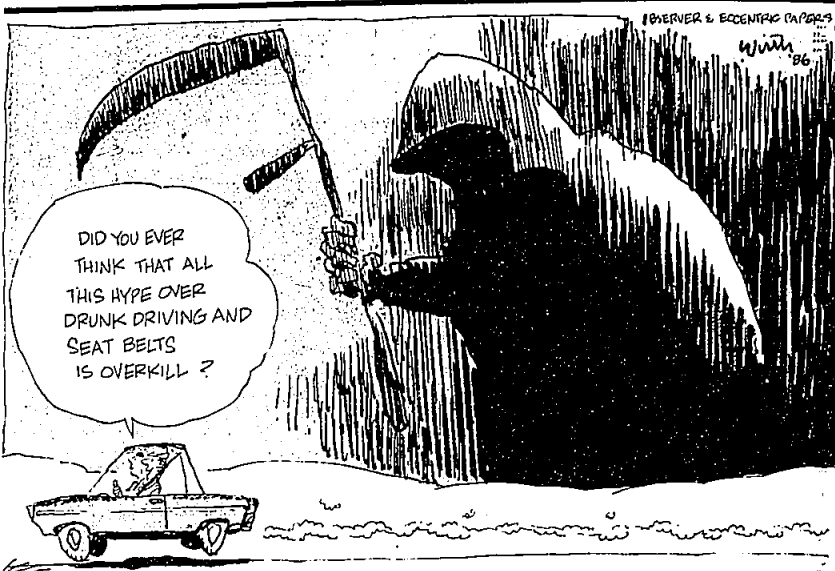
With Schulman's retirement official, Farmington-area residents should make it their business to scrupulously monitor the actions of the school board as it goes about the important job of hiring a successor.

Remember: Whoever succeeds Lew Schulman not only will have a tough act to follow. That person also will be in a position to influence the Farmington Public Schools' approach to instruction for many years to come.

Letters must be signed and include the addresses and telephone numbers of the authors. Names of the authors will be withheld from publication only for reasons we consider to be sufficient.

Send letters to: Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. We'll be happy to consider printing them.

— Bob Sklar



## Be thankful for safer roads

**WE** OUGHT to start the New Year off by being thankful — especially for everyone who has worked to make driving less of a hazard.

The evidence is beginning to mount. The campaigns by such organizations as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and by local and state police are having an effect.

Drunk driving arrests are up; fatal accidents are down.

The state Legislature stumbled around a bit last year before deciding that it could force people to wear seat belts in a car.

Such freedom advocates as state Rep. William Keith, D-Garden City, and state Sen. Patrick McCullough, D-Dearborn, objected to the so-called infringement on individual liberties.

**THE** LEGISLATIVE majority felt the issue was too important to leave in the laps of individual drivers. The state mandated that drivers and front-seat passengers shall wear seat belts or be fined accordingly. Most citizens, considering themselves law-abiding, began buckling up.

Already, there is evidence to indicate that this law is saving lives. Traffic accidents in Michigan killed 47 fewer vehicle occupants in the first five months of the state seat-belt law compared to the same period a year earlier, state police say.



Bob Wisler

"It's clear that safety belts are preventing deaths and serious injury," said Capt. Kenneth Sacerson, commander of the traffic services division.

**CAMPAIGNS** AGAINST drunk driving are also beginning to pay dividends.

A Michigan State Police study of 44 communities showed drunk-driving arrests rose from 10,065 in 1983 to 18,073 in 1984.

In Wayne County there were 171 fatal traffic accidents in the first 10 months of 1984 and 90 in the same period in 1985. It can only be assumed the crackdown on drunk drivers can be thanked for a dramatic saving of lives.

Oakland County was several years ahead of everyone finding that out.

Garden City Police Chief Charles Wilmoth, who heads a federally funded program aimed at curbing drunk driving, said, "I really think more people are seeing the light."

Wilmoth referred to a brochure that claims "More Drunk Drivers Are Seeing the Light," in reference to the flashing

light on top of a police car.

Wayne County communities, using federal funds for special alcohol enforcement teams, announced a 79-percent increase in drunk-driving arrests last year.

**THE** FOCUS on drunk drivers and the rise in liability insurance costs are causing bar owners to cut drinkers off quicker.

The Michigan Restaurant Association encourages its members to ensure that restaurateurs participate in a "designated driver" program whereby one person in a party is identified by a designated driver badge and receives free soft drinks for the night.

Restaurants, particularly chains, are telling their personnel to ensure that no one who has drunk too much drives away. The restaurant calls a cab or provides a ride home.

The impetus for much of this may have started a few years ago with only one mother, Candy Lightner, whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver in California. She was angry enough to go out and start Mothers Against Drunk Drivers.

The program has caught on nationally. In this area, Lee Landes, a retired Ford Motor Co. executive in Livonia, and his wife, Sue, have done more than their share of work in spreading the word.

They, among many others, give us much to be thankful for.

## Small houses are not passe

**AN** ECONOMIC WAR of sorts is surrounding us. The battlefields are yet-to-be-developed, muddy plots where future dream houses will be built.

But how large that dream home will be, and how big the lot on which it will stand, are part of the disagreement that spawned this war.

The dispute is between traditional rivals — the haves and those who wish to have. The flames are fueled by those who hope to profit.

In this case it's suburban homeowners vs. homeowner hopefuls, who have forged an alliance of convenience with the developers.

**THE** QUARREL is best outlined by Bloomfield Hills developer Paul Robertson.

"Communities don't follow demand. Household sizes are down. Consumers want smaller housing," he says.

In short, already established homeowners who bought homes in dreamer, more prosperous times insist that new homeowners pay the price to enter their economic clique — a large home on a correspondingly large lot.

But those communities that zone against smaller housing are living in another time.

The homes of the '60s and '70s are just too big — too big to beat, too big for modern families to live in and too big to finance.

**NEW HOME** shoppers want houses that

fit their lifestyle and allow them more cash to pursue other interests. Fewer children mean fewer bedrooms. A smaller lot means less lawn to mow and fewer shrubs to trim.

Some would just as soon rent rather than buy. That really sends some in the homeowner establishment up the wall.

A grand home has been replaced by travel and other leisure pursuits as a top consumer priority.

But the not-so-old guard is standing tough against these well-meaning intruders who just want to share in a piece of the American dream in their own fashion.

**OUT** WEST Bloomfield way, a developer

crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby

er's plan to build 54 rental, detached cluster homes in the big-ticket neighborhood around Lone Pine and Middlebelt has caused a real stir.

Neighbors have flocked to township hall complaining of transient renters and fear of declining property values.

But wait a second — just one darned second. This complex isn't exactly a low-income housing project. Each unit would be 2,000 square feet and rent for \$1,800 a month.

The disgruntled neighbors are beefing because their homes are 3,000 square feet.

Now, having a place to live isn't a contest. Neither is a person's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And nowhere in that Declaration of Independence does it say everybody who lives in the neighborhood has to have a house just as big as the next guy's.

For all those who give lip service to our economic system, let the market determine the size of tomorrow's houses; it's best for the collective economic good.

## Michigan 150 years old

**FIRST** USE of an automobile in Michigan was not by Henry Ford, although his company was the first enormously successful one. The honor belongs to Charles Brady King, according to Michigan History magazine.

On March 6, 1886, King drove a gaso-

line-powered car south on St. Antoine toward the Detroit River. King turned right on Jefferson, right again on Woodward, stopped in front of the Russell House Hotel on Cadillac Square and returned to the St. Antoine Street building, which housed his marine engine manufacturing company.