

# Cash awaits for Rackham heirs

WHEN THE final saga of Interstate 696 ultimately is written, a chapter should be devoted to the tale behind the scheduled publication in today's Wall Street Journal of a 2-by-5 legal notice which has been purchased to aid in tracking down any unknown heirs of philanthropists Horace H. and Mary Rackham.

This is the third and final insertion of the notice and is running in all Journal editions, coast to coast. It was sanctioned by Oakland County Circuit Court, will be paid for by the state of Michigan, and was placed by Attorney Thomas H. Healy of Plymouth, who is a special assistant attorney general pertaining to land taken in condemnation.

The tab for the three insertions amounts to \$19,000 and change. The fact that the Journal accepted the advertisement on credit speaks well for Lansing's current financial reputation.

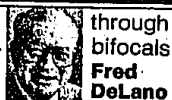
Even if your name is Rip Van Winkle and you have been asleep for 20 years, you can remember when arguments started about the specific route of the proposed I-696 corridor.

IT WAS the 7.9 mile center section through Southfield, Lathrup Village, Royal Oak Township, Oak Park, Huntington Woods, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak and Ferndale, joining I-75 in Hazel Park, that caused the uproar and brought a multitude of legal roadblocks.

Rip, you may not believe it, but construction actually is in progress and Robert Tura, I-696 ombudsman for the Michigan Department of Transportation, tells me that all segments will be completed and the entire highway open to traffic from beginning to end before 1989 wears out its welcome.

So what's this thing about the Rackham estate? Horace and wife, Mary, pioneer investors in the automotive industry, steered much of their fortune into philanthropic avenues, including being a chunk of land deeded on Nov. 4, 1924, to the city of Detroit for a public golf course on 10 Mile Road.

As I got the story from Healy, some wise legal mind saw to it that the deed included a provision which would return the land to "the grantors, heirs and assigns." If it ever were used for anything but a golf course.



through bifocals  
**Fred DeLano**

WHO COULD know that six decades later there would be 8.5 acres in the southwest corner at 10 Mile and Scott across which the state of Michigan would like to stretch a high-speed freeway? And what was a freeway, anyway? Or high-speed?

What that legal mind might have realized was the value of \$640,000 which is what the state has offered for the parcel in 1986.

The Rackhams were childless, and that has complicated matters. Focus of the search for heirs has been on the descendants of sisters and brothers in an ever-expanding range, for succeeding progeny have scattered to the four winds across the entire nation. That's why Judge Fred M. Meester approved this Wall Street Journal as a national tool for use in the search.

The quest is for "unknown and unrepresented" heirs of Horace H. Rackham, Mary A. Rackham, Charles Bussey, Myra Bussey, Bryson Dexter Horton, Mable Patterson, Zera Horton Patterson and Wadsworth Warren.

SOME HAVE been located and Healy says there has been fine cooperation by those persons and their legal representatives in trailing others. But unless they are made known by June 30, their right to any part of the compensation will be terminated.

Those who do surface will have the right to contest the state's offer, and can even ask for a jury trial in an effort to get a higher price if they choose. Meanwhile, the stakes remain those \$60 big ones, with Judge Meester's signature needed on the final document.

I understand that in such legal matters, the closer you nest to the main trunk of the family tree the more financial eggs you hatch. What a pity my only Uncle Horace was thrice removed through a half-brother to my maternal grandmother and was named Weese, not Rackham.

## Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

## Good health, a better life

To the editor: The importance of good health is highlighted during Older Americans Month this May with emphasis on ways to improve the later years of life by maintaining health and fitness. Individuals, families, community groups, business and industry are asked to focus individually and collectively on health education.

The program's thrust is to create a greater awareness of the need to modify behaviors that can lead to lifestyle diseases.

Added by the 1984 amendment to the Older Americans Act, Title VII—Older Americans Personal Health Education and Training Program—is the catalyst in encouraging the development of local health education programs.

The title was authorized in response to recommendations made by the 1981 White House Conference on Aging, which requested geriatric health promotion including elements of the wellness approach—self-responsibility, physical fitness, stress management, nutritional and environmental awareness.

Title VII specifically calls for the provision of leadership, resources, and the coordination necessary for the design of a uniform, standardized health education and training program. Graduate education institutions of public health are involved in the design of the program. Its implementation is through multipurpose senior centers.

At the state level, Michigan's health promotion initiative has been in operation for several months. Sponsored jointly by the State Office of Services to the Aging and the Michigan Department of Public Health, its theme—For a Better Life in Michigan, Season Your Days with Good Health—encourages all citizens to eat right, exercise and use medicine wisely.

The program recently received a unanimous citation from the federal Administration on Aging Region V Office for outstanding efforts.

Staying healthy as you get older requires a personal commitment to wellness and a healthy

lifestyle. While it's not always easy, it is vital to a better life with independence and dignity.

Joseph Rightley, chairman  
Commission on Services  
to the Aging  
Rochester

move to reject the plan altogether, for private institutions are a safer bet, and we all know about the Social Security system.

Wes Borucki,  
Birmingham

nestly argue that capital punishment is both a necessary and proper response.

L. Brooks Patterson,  
Prosecuting Attorney,  
Oakland County

## Reporting is professional

To the editor:

We appreciate Casey Hans' enthusiastic and professional reporting of our volunteers in your Farmington Observer. They provide valuable services to the patients, visitors and staff at Botsford General Hospital. Our volunteers truly enjoyed reading your article, as well as the photo coverage by Randy Borst.

Adele Emer, director  
Volunteer Services  
Botsford Hospital  
Farmington Hills

## Tuition trust fund is folly

To the editor:

When examining Gov. Blanchard's proposed tuition-payment program, the people of Michigan must realize that this is an election year, and that those state legislators who are up for reelection are not about to oppose an idealistic plan to "guarantee" tuition.

The fact is that Gov. Blanchard and state treasurer Robert Bowman base the plan on foolish presumptions. In the first place, they don't know if the return from the planned tuition trust fund would be taxed by the IRS. Also, if tuition rates increase faster than inflation, the proposed system would have to be bailed out by revenue from other sources. The same would be true if returns from the fund fall below the state's projections.

So instead of trying to butter up their constituents with this poorly planned folly, the legislators over in Lansing should be seeking answers to the plan's flaws from the Blanchard Administration, or they should

## Death penalty right course

To the editor:

In a recent letter to the editor, the writer Marvin Zalman took exception with my argument that capital punishment deters the crime of murder. In fact, he went so far as to suggest that I was deliberately misleading the public as to the true facts.

I said in my published debate printed in the Eclectic: "My opponents in this newspaper debate will claim there are no reputable studies supporting the proposition of deterrence from capital punishment. What they really should be saying is that there are no studies that they choose to accept."

In his letter to the editor Mr. Zalman has done exactly what I predicted critics would do: he based his entire criticism of deterrence on studies he chooses to support and simply dismisses any opposing study as "weak." I guess that's what makes debates.

One further point brought up by Mr. Zalman requires response. He suggests that capital punishment is a form of "brutalization" that breaks down traditional restraints on violent behavior. He wrote that he has some additional studies to show that homicides actually increase after executions. My response is that we have had 54 executions in the last 20 years in America. During those same two decades we've had approximately 400,000 murders in America. If the traditional restraints on violent behavior are breaking down I suggest the real culprit is the brutalization brought about by the devastation of 400,000 innocent victims.

Lastly, MIT published a study several years ago concluding that a baby born in Detroit statistically has a better chance of being shot and killed than any soldier in World War II. That's the brutalization for which I ear-

## Thanks for good story

To the editor:

I want to thank you for the good article on the new special education rules that appeared in the Observer. I hope people who read it are a bit reassured.

I suppose it did look as if those rules "sailed through" the board meeting. You have to remember though that they'd been discussed for hours on end at several other points during the two-year process.

As you may know, the Michigan Association for Emotionally Disturbed Children still does not endorse the rules. Every other organization covered by CAUSE has agreed to the final package.

I'm sure some are more enthusiastic than others, but all seem to appreciate the compromises that had to be made in order to get any rule changes at all.

School Boards (MASB), School administrators (MASA) and the teacher organizations (MEA and MFT) all supported the final package.

I guess that one group not in agreement is the basis for your 13-1 statement in the article. At any rate, the point was clearly made that agreement had been reached—even if everyone wasn't delighted with it.

At least something is in the works to update the procedures and we're set to evaluate as we go along. Thanks for the balanced reporting.

Hope to see you in Lansing at the state board meeting whenever you have the chance. Not many press people attend, and we do cover some important issues.

Dorothy Beardmore, trustee,  
State Board of Education

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