

# Indy fan wants no part of scalpers

In the aftermath of the double rainout at Indianapolis which forced a week's postponement of the 500-mile battle for auto racing's richest and most coveted championship, a friend gave away his rainchecks for two of the best seats at the Speedway. He did it without remorse, saying he was willing to settle for television's first live presentation of the race.

Thus did Mel Blunk let Mother Nature wash down the drain the opportunity to extend his record of having heard the call, "Gentlemen, start your engines," 34 successive years, starting with Troy Ruttman's victory in 1952.

his interest in auto racing.

The bug bit him back in '52 when a newspaper ad for Kirby Tours lured him into taking the train to Indianapolis the night before the 500, then back to Detroit by train after the race. Through the years he became a frequent patron of the tracks at Mt. Clemens, Flat Rock, Toledo, and MIS south of Jackson.

AS A TRUE devotee, he goes equipped with two stop watches, binoculars, and a radio with earphones. His wife often accompanies him, and at Indy they frequently have gone down for the



Fred Delano

qualifying trials as well as the main event.

This mania would not have been surprising had Mel been in the automotive field himself, for Indianapolis is an annual "must" for thousands of that ilk. But Blunk has obtained tickets on his

own instead of at the corporate trough and recalls, "In the '50s you could go down there, stay at the YMCA downtown at \$4.50, eat for \$1 a day, go to the race, and I know very well I didn't spend \$20 for gas and everything. You can't do that any more, of course."

The man never has driven a race car, and the only time he got a driver's view of the fabled 2 1/2 mile Indianapolis track came when he and his wife took a tourist bus at the Speedway Museum and were driven around the oval at the breakneck speed of 25 miles an hour!

Mel is a meticulous mathematician and in his working days was an expert on school budgets. It was only natural, then, that he would take note of some of the impromptu ways of making a buck that arose at Indianapolis. This I liked best:

Every ticket has a raincheck stub and as we were leaving, with the rain still coming down, I saw at least half a dozen men shouting, "Buy your rainchecks, buy your rainchecks, buy your rainchecks." Some people were selling \$25 seats for \$2, or whatever they could get.

"Maybe some had 500 miles to go to get home. For whatever reason, they were willing to sell. Some of these guys had packets of stubs a couple of inches thick. They knew they could come back and sell them when the weather cleared and the race was rescheduled."

"There's no law against scalping in Indiana. For some of those seats they probably charged \$200 apiece."

Well, I'll be damned, Mel, I'm proud of you that someone got your pair for free.

AN EDUCATOR by trade, Blunk in retirement is a savvy, agile 70 who had his son-in-law, Douglas Jaskierny, in tow when the deluge hit May 25. At \$45 a copy, their tickets were for seats 30 rows up in the covered main straightaway paddock area, looking directly down on what should have been the bustling pits.

"The 40-acre parking lot that fans call 'the north 40' became a 40-acre mud hole," Mel commented. "The infield golf course was solid mud. Concession stands were virtually sold out by noon. The estimated 300,000 or more spectators had nothing to do but eat, drink and go for walks. That's what we did, too — for seven hours."

"The wreckers had a busy day, making a lot of money pulling cars out of the mud. And there were two fellows with golf carts running people in from 30th street to the gate at a dollar a head. They could carry five and picked up hundreds of dollars."

"Also there were spontaneous vendors selling plastic garbage bags. They'd turn them upside down, cut a hole in the middle to put the head through, plus two holes for the arms. They were selling these as rain capes to people who were trying to keep dry. The conditions were the worst I had ever seen at Indy."

Although "short" in stature, Blunk was a nine letter athlete in track, tennis and basketball back in his high school days, but he's at a loss to explain

## Farmington readers' forum

### Quote leads to response

To the editor:

I was somewhat taken back by the way I was quoted in the article by Jackie Klein in the May 22 issue of the Farmington Observer.

In my testimony before the House of Representatives Special Committee on Small Business, I expressed the concern the veterinary profession has over the proliferation of tax-exempt full service veterinary hospitals operated by humane societies in southeastern Michigan. Because they are tax-exempt and partially funded by tax deductible donations, they are in a position to charge much lower fees for services than competing tax paying private entrepreneurs.

It is a common practice for persons using these facilities to not only pay a lower fee in the first place, they then make their checks out to the "Humane Society" and deduct the cost of medical care for their pets from their income tax as "charitable contributions." This results not only in loss of income to local tax paying veterinarians in private practice, it affects all of us since

these people are paying less than their legal fair share in both state and federal income taxes.

I did not say I don't know any indigent pet owners in Farmington Hills as I was quoted. What I did say was I don't know of many indigent pet owners in Avon or Rochester Hills where the Michigan Humane Society has opened its newest full service veterinary hospital. The same is true in Sterling Heights where the Macomb Humane Society has had a similar facility in operation for the past few years.

It would appear that if Humane Societies are to serve the functions for which they were originally conceived and chartered, they should be operating clinics in the inner city where there is a need, rather than the more affluent suburbs where there are plenty of private veterinarians, and where the bulk of the population can well afford to pay the usual fees to have their pets cared for.

The veterinary profession does not dispute a Humane Society's right to operate veterinary clinics. We just want them to be in the areas where they are really needed or at least play by the same rules as the rest of us in the pet health care business, and prohibit their donations from receiving tax-deductible treatment

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 4802

from both state and federal Internal Revenue Services. They shouldn't be able to have their cake and eat it, too.

John H. Richardson, D.V.M.  
Farmington

### Road forum: very pivotal

To the editor:

You may soon be asked to approve and finance a plan to improve the road structure in Oakland County. The Oakland County Chamber of Commerce believes this issue is important to anyone living in or doing business in Oakland County.

If you are interested in providing input to the Oakland County Road Commission, local, county and state government officials who are devising this plan, you should be at the Oakland County Auditorium, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac, at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, June 16.

The Oakland County Chamber of Commerce has arranged this forum so that you can express your ideas and concerns before the plans are finalized. This may be your only opportunity to do so. Oakland County is in an economic boom and growth period

that shows signs of slowing up. It becomes readily apparent that the road network must be adjusted to accommodate these new areas of growth. All citizens of the county need to tune in to an overall program.

It is also important to improve the existing network of roads to maintain a safe and effective flow of traffic. Anyone who has traveled across Oakland County during rush hours can attest to this.

There has been a lot of discussion about what the road commission feels are the county's needs in the near future. It appears that each different segment of the county has its ideas and concerns as to how any program of road improvement should be financed. The chamber feels that the general public should now speak up and express its concerns so that a more uniform understanding is achieved.

This is an opportunity for the public to comment on its perception of the needs in road improvements where they are needed, who should pay, what method of payment should be used to finance these projects, and what alternatives, if any, are acceptable to achieve the best results.

Oakland County  
Chamber of Commerce

### Your efforts appreciated

To the editor:

Thanks for the excellent coverage of the Farmington Memorial Day Parade in the Thursday, May 29, edition of the Observer.

A hearty well done to all hands especially Susan Steinmueller, staff writer, for her most interesting and well written stories; and to Rick Smith, staff photographer, for the great pictures.

To many of us, the Farmington Memorial Day Parade is "main street America" at its best, honoring and remembering those who gave their lives for our country and all of us.

Indeed, all of those who marched and participated and all of those who watched, and the Observer team that covered the parade kept with those who gave their lives for freedom, life, liberty and all that this great country stands for.

John E. Tobin  
Jr. Vice Commander  
Broadhead — Farmington Hills  
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VFV

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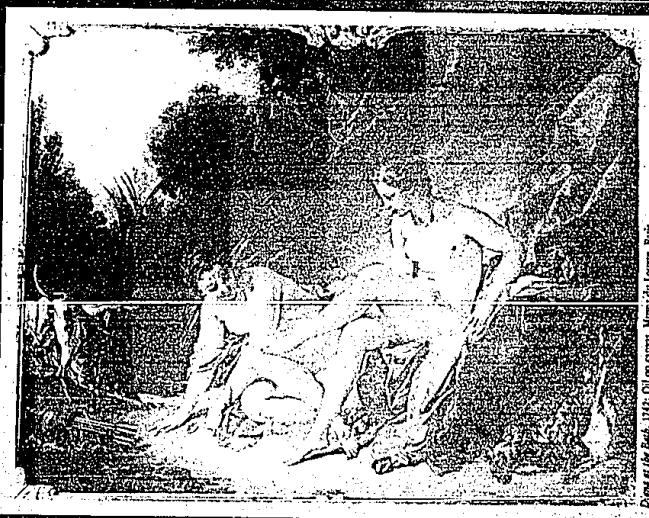
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