

McMurray, we're glad to have you here

IT WAS ONLY a few degrees above zero one evening early last week when Al Ackerman came on the tube and confirmed what thousands of viewers already knew, "Baby, it's cold outside."

HEAVEN FORBID that I would demean Mr. Ackerman for not offering solace from winter's bite, Al having his hands full running the affairs of the Pistons, Red Wings, Tigers, Lions, et al.

Also, this bids fair to be one of Al's busiest periods, what with playoffs looming for our basketball and hockey entries, puzzling baseball issues to be surmounted and somehow an answer to be found to curing the Lions' constipated offense.

McMurray, on the other hand, is not beset with such diverse worries. Weather is his only business. I'm stretching a point, it's true, when I say he actually "arranged" a sunny afternoon, but if weathercasters can be blamed for fouling things up — as they sometimes are — it's only fair to pay them an occasional kind word when it seems that God's in his heaven and all's right with the world.

IF HIS NAME and voice are familiar to you, it's because you, too, are a frequent WJR radio listener. He helps wake me up every morning, but as many of the personalities in the imaginative realm of radio, I don't know whether he's tall or short, fat or slim.

He does come over the air waves in a mild-mannered fashion and can be relied upon to tell one whether to wear boots and muffer or to polish off the golf clubs. Spring, he says, will be coolish and "wetter than normal." He must be right, for The Old Farmer's Almanac says the same thing.

You may find it odd, but you don't call WJR in the Fisher Building to chat with McMurray. What you do is call the firm of which he is president, Commercial Weather Services, which is headquartered in Flint. I suppose that takes a word of explanation.

First of all, McMurray, 45, is a native of New York City and in 1984 was graduated from New York State Maritime



through bifocals
Fred DeLano

College in the Bronx with a degree in meteorology. He escaped from the Big Apple through service in the Air Force, five years of which were in the woe-be-gone state of Oklahoma.

UPON DISCHARGE, he sought employment in the real world and fate directed him to Michigan where Channel 12 in Flint had an opening for a weather expert. Complete with wife and three children, he made that their home.

One thing led to another, as they sometimes do, and when commercial opportunities seemed to outweigh the television stipend, McMurray set up shop on his own.

He and his associates now provide weather information daily to eight northern Michigan and Ontario radio stations besides WJR, thus remaining non-competitive with his bread and butter account, besides serving a number of private business firms.

When you hear him on the air, more than likely talking with Col. Joseph Priestly McCarthy — who is several years older than McMurray, it sounds like they're across the table from each other, doesn't it? Instead, they're maybe 70 or 80 miles apart, communicating on what the trade calls a "voice dedicated broadcast line."

This is not unique to WJR. It is simply modern technology. For instance, Earl Fennell actually is in Chicago when you hear him on WJW.

INFORMATION from global satellites, as well as the National Weather Service, is a godsend to them all. But Sonny Elliot still has a file of the best jokes and is the only weathercaster who can locate Engadine. . . or is it Engaringa-ding-adine?

McMurray does have one confession. He has tried deliberately to lose the New York accent in which he was raised. He admits those five years in Oklahoma helped, even though he didn't adapt to cowpoke talk. Listen late next week and you may hear him tell J.P. the moon is in its first phase; never will he say first "qwahtah."

We're happy to have you in Michigan, Jawn.

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.

Public transit must improve

To the editor:
As we begin the New Year, it is appropriate to assess the current status of transportation in Southeastern Michigan.

The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) again earned high marks for the quality of its service to the 4.3 million residents of the region. Each day during the year, the Authority put 200 regularly scheduled buses on the streets, along with 82 "dial-a-ride" type buses. More than 10 million passengers were carried to their destinations comfortably, economically, and in safety.

That's the good news. The bad news is that traffic congestion worsened during 1988. In some areas, business suffers as customers, employees, and suppliers struggled with traffic jams. Some businessmen even talked of relocating to areas where transportation is plentiful.

A plan to relieve some of this congestion by putting more buses on the street has been on the books since 1983. Adding buses is generally the quickest and cheapest solution to traffic congestion, particularly during rush hours. A new bus, which generally takes 40 commuting cars off the street, in each rush hour, can be delivered to SEMTA in a matter of months, at a cost of about \$145,000 per bus.

Unfortunately, the plan for more-bus service in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties has been stymied by the lack of agreement on funding (SEMTA does not have the power to levy taxes; instead, it must wait for action by other levels of government, such as the Legislature and various local governments.)

The lack of action on funding is almost unique to Southeast Michigan. In 40 other areas of Michigan, citizens have gone to the polls and voted for transit funding; in Southeast Michigan, the citizens have never even been allowed to vote on funding for area wide transit.

All other major metropolitan areas of the nation have raised local money to support transit. As a result, other cities have been moving forward with solutions to their traffic problems while Southeast Michigan has done nothing. Partly as a result, the economies of these regions are growing stronger all the time.

One example worth mentioning is Los Angeles. Throughout the post-war era, Los Angeles has been considered the most automobile-dependent city in the nation and the "freeway capital of the world." But, in 1985 alone, Los Angeles completed a bus maintenance facility the size of 25 football fields and broke ground for a major subway. Los Angeles is determined to use transit to keep traffic moving so that its thriving economy does not stagnate. All other major cities have also decided that "transit means business" and are upgrading their bus fleets and other elements of public transportation.

The coming new year presents this region with a new opportunity to do something about transportation. Metropolitan Detroit is the only region in the top 10 to have lost population since 1980. A lack of an effective comprehensive transportation system contributed to this loss. It would be tragic to let that trend continue simply because other cities had the foresight to move ahead with their transportation plans while we did nothing.

Albert Martin
General Manager
SEMTA

Make English our language

To the editor:
When all of us were in school, we learned that the United States was a "melting pot" of people from other countries.

We were glad to have them and they

were glad to come and adapt themselves to the American way.

They learned new ways of doing things, new ideas, ate new foods, and they all quickly learned a new language — English. While retaining their heritage, they thrived through adoption to the American way.

The United States is an English-speaking country. We welcome others with open arms to our shores. Welcome them to join us, not change us.

English has worked for 200 years as our national language. Those who truly want to become a part of America quickly learn English. There is no reason to adopt a second language.

The best analogy I can think of was in a recent editorial in the Detroit News. In part, it said, when you invite guests to your home, you make them welcome and share what you have. But if those guests were to arrive, walk in, and begin to rearrange your furniture to suit themselves, you would give serious thought about inviting them again.

Our country opens its arms to welcome others, but those others, if they choose to become a part of this great country, have the duty to assimilate themselves to our established ways of speaking. This is why I strongly support Congressman Broomfield's bill to officially name English as our national language.

Monica M. Leaning
Farmington Hills

Poetry package is appreciated

To the editor:
I thoroughly enjoyed and plan to use in my classroom the wonderful children's poetry corner you recently published. It is this kind of thing that makes your paper so eminently readable.

Diane Appel
Farmington

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