

# Opinion

Robert Sklar editor/477-5450  
Rich Periberg assistant managing editor

33203 Grand River Ave./Farmington, MI 48024

Philip Power chairman of the board  
Richard Aginlan president  
Dick Isaham general manager  
Steve Barnaby managing editor  
Fred Wright circulation director

O&E Thursday, March 10, 1987

## Toughen Hills' host ordinance

SO WHAT if Farmington Hills has an ordinance designed to discourage underage drinking at house parties. We'll just move our parties to a nearby motel or hotel room.

Sound familiar? Moving parties — laced with alcohol and drugs — from houses to hotel or motel rooms is exactly what many teenagers do, often with their parents' knowledge, if not blessing, according to local innkeepers.

At least two times a week, one innkeeper says, parents rent rooms for their teenagers to host unchaperoned parties. At other times, young adults rent rooms for teenagers to party. And the partying goes on until complaining guests alert the inn manager.

Parents who support such shady practices typically admit they do so to protect their expensive homes from the antics of teenage party-goers.

SUCH SIDESTEPPING of the law and abuse of rented rooms clearly justify a proposal by Farmington Families in Action to toughen Farmington Hills' host liability ordinance.

The ordinance imposes fines or jail terms on adults 17 or older who knew or should have known that minors were consuming alcohol or drugs at house parties under their control — and who failed to try to stop it.

The proposed amendment would extend the ordinance to adults who host parties in hotel or motel rooms or rental halls.

It would help close a loophole in the existing ordinance — adopted amid the glare of media attention in May 1985. Although intended to nab irresponsible parents, it has been enforced seven times — only twice against adults 21 or older.

WITH SPRING break and high school graduation in the wings, the timing is right to toughen the ordinance.

No stranger to controversy as one of the host law's strongest boosters, Committee for the Prevention of Teenage Delinquency member Betty Nicolay says Farmington Families in Action wants to spread the word that partying



Bob Sklar

**'We want our young people to party drug-free. We want them to remember they had a good time.'**

— Betty Nicolay  
family activist

and drinking aren't synonymous.

Says Nicolay, "We want our young people to party drug-free. We want them to remember they had a good time."

The host law probably hasn't reduced the number of teenage drinkers — upwards of 75 percent of this area's high school students drink on weekends. But it probably has reduced the number of house parties, police say.

The newest rage — parents renting rooms for their teenagers to party — underscores the extreme to which unthinking parents will go to avoid a confrontation with drunken or drug-crazed teens.

**SOCIAL FORCES**, low self-esteem, revenge or peer pressure aside, whether young people are baited by the lure of alcohol often hinges on their individual makeup.

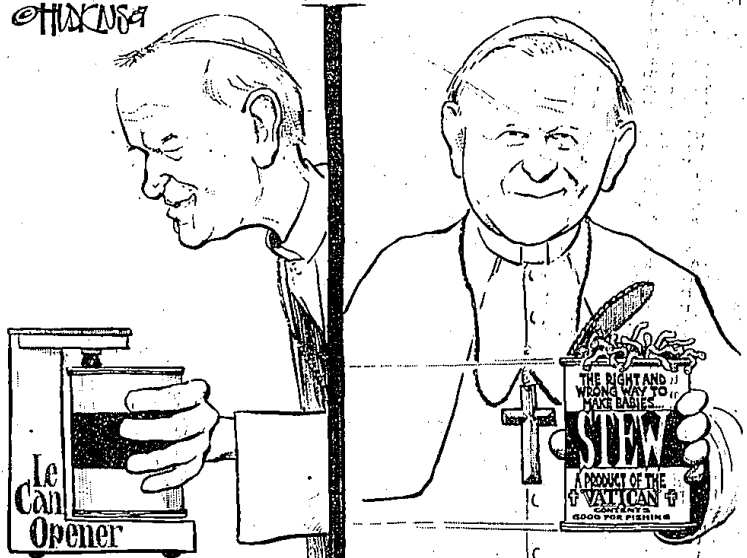
Still, parents who condone or ignore underage drinking, or who overindulge at home or while driving, set an example hardly worth emulating.

It's mom and dad who typically hold the key to real behavioral change among their kids.

Parent support groups and family drug seminars are fine.

But sometimes a hardheaded approach — like prosecuting parents who rent rooms for their teenagers to party — is necessary to set the stage.

©HICKASA



## Howe joins pizza war

SOME MIND-browsing on a sunny March day.

Thrill of thrills. Got to eat lunch with Gordie Howe recently as he visited Farmington Hills to promote a new pizza chain — Oliver's Pizza.

Nice to see the best Red Wing ever involved with metro Detroit once again. He plans on having a golf outing come spring for some benefit or other. Word has it, that one of the O&E suburbs is being eyed for the tourney.

Although never much of a sports fan, I always have had a special place in my heart for hockey. And for me Gordie Howe will always mean hockey. Some other pretty hard-core journalists in attendance at that lunch felt the same way that I did.

We just all sat around and grinned like a bunch of little kids. One guest brought a brick from the old red barn, Olympia, to be autographed. Jeze, I forgot mine and settled for an autographed picture instead.

By the way, despite all the incredible records he still holds in hockey, his biggest thrill was playing professional hockey with his two sons, Mark and Marty.

Anybody entering the pizza wars in this town is going to need reinforcements with the clout of a Gordie Howe. The two newest entrepreneurs are Bill Edick of West Bloomfield and Dominick Oliver of Utica.

Attending the same high school in Utica, the pair teamed up after nearly

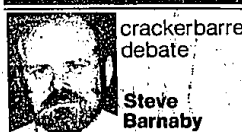


two decades to challenge the pizza kings Tom Monaghan and Mike Illitch. Already with 10 stores open, they plan to have 20 new stores opened this year in metro Detroit and another 50 opened outside by 1988.

Somehow it seems appropriate that it's Gordie Howe who is taking on both the Red Wing and Tiger owners at their own game.

Watch the elbows, Tom and Mike.

**IN THE SMALL WORLD** category, it's interesting to see that Seaholm High School is renting space to a Japanese



crackerbarrel debate

Steve Barnaby

school. Sure hope some of the Birmingham kids got to meet the Japanese students. Always have figured we need more cultural exchange. This generation of students must learn how to compete in a world market. Remember how not too many years ago we laughed at the label "Made in Japan?"

**SPEAKING OF INTERNATIONAL**

In last Monday's edition of the Livingston Observer was an article about Mike Maher who pulled up stakes and moved permanently to the Emerald Isle — Ireland. The Franklin High and Schoolcraft College alumnus lives in a town called Bray with wife June and son Brendan.

Everybody's got a favorite dream spot. Mine's Mission Peninsula up on Traverse Bay. Every year I spend a good deal of time just hanging out in the Traverse area. In recent years I've found it's equally as beautiful in the winter as the summer — and fewer people, too.

Till next week, think spring.

## News items reflect a diverse suburbia

THE NEWSPAPER you are reading is one of 12 Observer and Eccentric newspapers. Twice a week, the papers tell you what is happening in your community. But what about the events occurring in communities served by the other 11 papers?

Some very interesting stories are happening there. What's most interesting is that any of these stories could have happened in your community. Here are some examples from the last week or so:

• A new trial was ordered for a Farmington Hills man who has spent 20 years in prison after he was convicted of murdering his wife. The man, John Merlo, was convicted of shooting to death his 18-year-old estranged wife with four shots from a .32-caliber revolver. The shooting took place at the beauty shop where the woman worked.

The issue is not so much if Merlo killed his wife. Instead, a U.S. district judge has ruled that the trial judge erred in his instructions to the jury about whether the verdict should be first-degree murder, which carries no parole, or the lesser crimes of second-degree murder or manslaughter.

• Six sophomore from Livonia high schools were hurt when a car crashed into a tree. Four sustained serious injuries. Of the six occupants of the car, only one was 16. Police do not believe he was the driver. The suspected driver, 18, had alcohol on his breath, according to police.

• When fires broke out at the same time on both sides of Southfield, fire fighters from neighboring Farmington Hills responded to one to give mutual



Rich Periberg

**What's most interesting is that any of these stories could have happened in your community.**

aid. They were turned back by the paid, full-time Southfield firefighters who said volunteers from Farmington Hills "aren't capable of providing the professional level of services" that Southfield can.

• A cat burglar who claimed he committed \$900 to 1,000 break-ins in Oakland County said he once almost left a note in a Birmingham home to let the sleeping family "know how easy it was to get into their house." He said he hit between 10 and 20 homes a night, making off with \$800 to \$1,400 nightly. He also claimed to have \$43,000 buried up north area nestegg.

• By a 5-2 vote, the Plymouth-Canton school board voted not to censor the R-rated movie "The Breakfast Club" and "E.T." and other controversial teaching materials such as the book "Rules for Radicals" and information about O.J. boards and palmistry. The movies are shown to psychology and English literature classes. "Rules for Radicals" is not required reading but is on a resource list for Plymouth Salem High School English students studying Zen and Emerson.

## 'Damn fool' ideas get notice

ONE IS FULL state funding of all courts. The other is statewide collection of school property taxes — either on industrial property worth more than \$10 million, or on all property.

Both ideas are based on the fallacious notion that Michigan has one statewide economy and one price index.

State government embarked on the plan for full funding of courts prior to the 1979-83 recession in the worst possible way — by beginning with Detroit and Wayne County courts.

Since then, no other counties or communities have been added to the list. Today we have a dual system of court payments — one for Detroit/Wayne, one for the rest of the state.

THE MICHIGAN system has been that the state pays about two-thirds of a judge's salary and a "local control unit" the rest. For circuit and probate courts, the local unit is the county. For district courts, the local unit is one or more cities and townships, or the county.

Thus, in 1985 circuit judges were paid as low as \$57,200; others get the maximum \$74,888. District court salaries range from \$52,656 to \$71,632.

The Michigan Judges Association and retired Chief Justice G. Mennen Williams say all judges should get the same.

One gets the impression these folks have been reading only law books the last 211 years and haven't heard about Adam Smith and "The Wealth of Nations." Smith distinguished between "real" income and monetary prices. And the judges haven't been reading the papers lately and apparently don't know that Michigan is a whole series of local economies.

**IN THE AUTO** insurance business, it's like two different worlds — one in metro Detroit, another outside.

Read the classified ads for houses in our suburban papers and then in the Saginaw News and Kalamazoo Gazette. There's at least a 25-percent difference — more, when you reach the Iron Mountain Daily Globe.

Feed a parking meter in Escanaba and one around the Renaissance Center. Price levels differ considerably between local economies.

Judges' titles are equal, but the jobs aren't. Judges in Menominee and Kalamazoo counties don't handle the kinds of product liability cases that Wayne and Oakland judges field.

Well, the state Legislature and Gov. James Blanchard haven't yet got around to finding the bucks to pay for all courts. Meanwhile, the outstate natives are getting restless: Either take



Tim Richard

back that Detroit/Wayne money, they say, or give us ours.

The dual system — state payment of a basic salary supplemented by the local control unit — is ideally suited to our economies.

THE DAMN FOOL notion of statewide collection of school property taxes — particularly on big industry — has been around several decades.

Farm districts concocted it to get a bite of the city slickers' tax base without giving up local political control.

Besides being economically unrealistic by Smithian standards, it would be politically unfair. Some cities and counties have made enormous efforts to recruit and serve industry, not only for the jobs but for the school tax base those industries would provide.

State government needs to plunk more money into education, but this isn't the way. Read Adam Smith. Read the papers.