

# Opinion

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## Potential lifesavers

Say yes to school graduation parties

**L**ISTEN UP, graduating seniors at North Farmington, Harrison, Farmington and Mercy. The high probability of a snapped neck, a mangled body or instant death when a speeding car rams a tree underscores why drinking and driving don't mix.

It's great you're part of Channel 4's "Project Graduation." But don't overlook the meaning of the "Don't Drink and Drive, Together We Can Make A World of Difference" public service message you're delivering.

Don't get so caught up sharing the thrill of graduation, you turn your hard-earned diploma into a death certificate. The sobering reality is that a drunken person is 100 times more likely to die in a car crash.

**THAT'S WHY** the community should jump at supporting the upcoming all-night graduation parties hosted by your parents: "Beach Party," "Bon Voyage" and "Endless Summer" — simple themes, but potential lifesavers.

If last year's all-night party at North was any indication, there should be as many good times as there would be at



Bob Sklar

any drinking party.

As Jackie Aho, North's 1986 valedictorian and now a University of Michigan sophomore, put it: "I thought it might be hokey. But parents put a lot of time, money and effort into it. It came out as a well-done, classy event. There was so much to do, most kids didn't want to leave until the end."

One school party is certainly more practical than dozens of house parties. Why not have a gathering point free of alcohol's killer grip?

**THE ALL-NIGHT** parties eliminate peer pressure to drink. They show you can enjoy graduation night, you can have that one final fling, and not be tempted by booze.

The admission price, which covers

food, entertainment, party favors and casino credit, is no more than the cost of a bottle of potentially deadly liquor — \$8 to \$10.

Farmington-area merchants have done their part, donating an array of gift prizes and auction items, everything from clock radios to dormitory refrigerators.

The all-night party gives senior class members — whether bound for college or a trade school — one last opportunity to share laughs and memories. It zaps any feeling of rejection or loneliness — at least for a night.

**MANY OF THE** 1,200 graduates at North, Harrison, Farmington and Mercy won't see their classmates again. But chances are good they'll remember that last link to their high school years, the all-night party.

It's as much of a memory mill as the senior class yearbook.

Whether you're a parent, merchant or simply a resident, your support of the all-night parties — via money or merchandise — is needed. Do your part to help assure no graduating senior becomes a gruesome highway statistic.

## New death watch brings home war

**ANOTHER WAR** HAS come home to America. Once again we count our dead and wounded.

Their faces peer at us from the newspaper pages, always so young, so full of hope. But for the families of those dead and missing, hope and vitality have been drained away.

For suburban Detroit, the Persian Gulf war between Iran and Iraq has become all too real. For the Erwin family of Troy it is devastating. Their son, Steve, 22, is listed as missing and presumed dead.

Listen closely and you will hear the same voices that 20 years ago whispered and then screamed, first in confusion and then in outrage.

**"YOU CAN'T** tell friend from enemy over there."

"Why didn't we shoot first?"

"What are we doing over there, anyway?"

"Why is the government putting our boys in that kind of danger?"

Just two years ago, the USS Stark sat berthed on the Detroit River during the International Freedom Festival, a relic in these days of high tech weaponry.

Even then the Iran/Iraq war raged on. But it was remote and hard to understand — and really none of our business, anyway, we told ourselves.

Today, we understand. It is our business. We understand that Michigan men have been killed in a war, undeclared by our Congress but one in which we are becoming more deeply involved.



crackerbarrel debate  
Steve Barnaby

Our business is to prevent the mistakes of the last war. We must speak out now, before the list of names grows ever longer.

**ONCE AGAIN,** those dying come from the heart of America, from families who work hard and wish only to be left alone. But the greed and avarice of international politics have thrust them into a limelight they don't deserve.

Just a few years ago Steve Erwin walked the halls of Troy Athens High School, safe and far away from the turmoil of Midwest politics.

This week he became its victim. A memorial won't be built for Steve Erwin. Oh sure, the president will send the family a letter of condolence and attend a memorial service. He will tell us in real tough language that it will never happen again, he'll see to that.

But those of us out here in middle America don't believe you, Mr. President. Too many of our sons have been killed for causes in which we don't believe and for reasons we don't understand.



At North Farmington's all-night graduation party last year, Kim Sabin (left), Scott Stern and Paul Wahrman enjoyed playing blackjack with play money.

## Campground debate

Township's tax base argument is flawed

**"YA-DIT-TAH, bam-bam-bam"** Kevin Schwartz, line 527 . . . Bonga-bonga-bonga, baby . . . Greg Brown, line 332 . . .

An inner-city alley? An acid-head hangout? No, you hear that sound week-days on the Huron River in the Island Lake State Recreation Area.

Source of the cacophony is the nearby Cars & Concepts Inc. plant. There is an open lot, the size of two football fields where autos are stored, and around the lot is a ring of tall poles armed with loudspeakers. When workers (the above names are fictional) aren't being paged, a rock radio station is broadcast.

In summer you can hear it a mile away; in winter, when there is no foliage, two miles. It's noise pollution — ignorant and boorish.

But that's what goes on in Green Oak Township, the governmental unit where the plant is located.

**GREEN OAK** Township officials have a far different notion of what constitutes a blight on aesthetics: a campground.

The state Department of Natural Resources wants to build a 195-unit campground in the Island Lake area. It would be a half-mile or so south of I-96 freeway and just east of Kensington Road. Thousands of you know the inter-

section from visits to Kensington Metropark and Kent Lake.

The battleground was an obscure body called "RC2" — Regional Clearinghouse Review Committee, an arm of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. It reviewed DNR's application for a \$950,000 land trust fund grant.

With perfectly straight faces, Green Oak Township's finest minds argued the plan is "aesthetically detrimental." And the site is literally around the corner from the audio abomination emanating from Cars & Concepts.

**THE TOWNSHIPERS** argued that expanded state land holdings take property off the tax rolls — money they need to provide law enforcement in the Island Lake area.

They sorta forgot that Cars & Concepts owner Dick Chrysler demanded a 50-percent, 12-year tax abatement before building his woodland factory. Chrysler told me so during the 1984 gubernatorial primary. In other words, Green Oak gives away its tax base and then pleads poverty before RC2.

They talked about their zoning plan in terms so lofty that some RC2 members were fooled into thinking Green Oaks really has a plan.

Drive along old Grand River from



Tim Richard

Kensington Road to Brighton: a rustic DNR office, an alcoholics hospital on a former farm, C&C and several small plants, a motel, scattered houses, a lone restaurant, more housing, a bus station, a bar, a supermarket. That's zoning?

In practice, anything seems to go in Green Oak Township if it produces tax revenue.

**AN RC2 MEMBER** from Taylor seemed to have been taken in by the township slickers.

"It's absolutely obvious," he said, "DNR would save itself a lot of trouble if it would start by sitting down with local government first."

In practice, townships with DNR property tend to be dead against the rest of us poor slobs enjoying the woods, hills, ponds, river and wetlands. They want tax base.

Fortunately, RC2 finally gave DNR something resembling approval for the campground.

## Silent approval nourishes racism with the zealots

**BOB MILES** LIVES a few miles north of the Howell paper where I once worked. At the time, Miles said he wouldn't talk about his white supremacist views or the bombings of Pontiac school buses that landed him free room and board at a federal penitentiary.

Since Miles otherwise was not a very interesting subject, I never pursued an interview. I wish I had. Today he is hot news.

His notoriety would amuse an old re-actor friend of mine. The guy insisted that Miles saw shadows where there were none. Specifically, he said Miles was fearful of government surveillance, proof of which were the small planes that regularly circled his home in a flyspeck of a community called Coho-tach.

**WHAT MILES** apparently didn't know was that the flight pattern for pilot training school at the nearby airport used his farmhouse as a turning point. Those sneaky feds were in fact fledgling student pilots.

If the story is true, it may say something about right-wing paranoia. On the other hand, Miles was arrested earlier this month by the federal government and charged with sedition.

How serious should we take these small-minded purveyors of hate and racism? That's the question faced by newspapers when small bands of self-styled neo-Nazis announce they will parade in town, as they did in Birmingham two weeks ago.

Do you ignore them, so they don't get the publicity they so desperately want? Or do you cover them because, after all, they are an unusual event in the community and it is important that readers know that their kind of poisoned thinking does not perish easily?

**EXCEPT FOR** the isolated violence they may provoke or initiate, the most radical of the white supremacists doesn't bother me as much as my secret fear that the reason they exist is because they believe somewhere in the heart of decent white folks is a flicker of affection for their bile.

And why not? No one would pay much



Rich Perlberg

**How serious should we take these small-minded purveyors of hate and racism? . . . Do you ignore them, so they don't get the publicity they so desperately want? Or do you cover them because, after all, they are an unusual event in the community and it is important that readers know that their kind of poisoned thinking does not perish easily?**

attention — other than bemusement — if a bunch of young thugs walked through town saying disparaging things about Rotarians. Rotarians, to my knowledge, have little reason to fear prejudice. The same can't be said for blacks or Jews, the two main targets of white supremacists.

Once the Howell newspaper ran two front page stories on a convocation of Miles' colleagues, complete with a picture of a cross burning. The outrage from the community, which was well aware that Miles lived in their midst, was considerable. The chamber of commerce was shocked. How could we give the town such a poor image? Several ministers and a school of teachers wrote angry letters about the paper's lack of taste.

A few months later, out of curiosity we checked at the same churches and schools to see how they had observed Martin Luther King's birthday. None had done a thing.

And somewhere Bob Miles was smiling.