

# Reader loyalty prompts thanks

TO SOLID citizens like Gordie Howe, Al Kalline, Irish Thomas, Bob Seger and a few other box office heroes, fan clubs go with the territory. The adulation showered upon them by the paying public is taken in stride by the true greats who realize their good fortune, yet there always are a few boneheads who consider their time too precious to mingle with the peasants.

This is not a discourse that will point the finger at any of the latter, but the fan club concept comes to mind because mine recently disbanded when he and I — yes, the singular is correct — met by chance in a dry cleaner's parking lot.

It was there that he pulled from the trunk of his car and handed me a bundle of approximately 300 of my columns, which he had carefully scissored from newspapers over the years.

THE MAGNITUDE of such flattery silenced the wisecracking urge to ask if he had given up fishing and no longer needed wrappers, also leaving it unsaid that spring housecleaning admittedly yields strange items in dusty rafters.

The man's name is William Carl Hartmann and he will be 92 years of age next Oct. 20. I told him that starting in the '30s I have had bylines in at least 20 newspapers in this country but that no one else ever had preserved the stuff to haunt me like his collection did. I asked him why he had bothered.

It turns out that in Bill's boyhood, his father wrote a column regularly for a Long Island paper at Huntington, N.Y. "You write a great deal like he did," Bill added. "I saved yours because they reminded me of him."

I'll admit I didn't know how in the devil to answer, but I'll put it in print right now that such a unique compiment has come only once in a lifetime.

There's a bit of printer's ink in Bill's blood, too, for back in the '20s when he was employed by the Cadillac Division of General Motors he wrote personality bits and bites for a Cadillac house organ. Later he worked many years as a commissioned representative of the Sinclair Refining Co. and we've known each other pretty well for about 20 years.

FATE DID Bill two good turns by seeing that he found his true niche in Michigan, for not only did he achieve business success but also discovered the



through bifocals  
**Fred DeLano**

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girl of his dreams, a young lady from Wyandotte named Lillian. She still is his constant companion and two weeks from tomorrow, June 5, they will observe their 63rd wedding anniversary.

These are mentally alert, physically active, good humored senior citizens who are much to be envied. Yes, they have seen many changes over the years, but Bill says, "We took them as they came."

As for returning to his original New York City stamping grounds, he adds, "I wouldn't take the place if you gave it to me."

The experience of being tongue-tied when Bill handed over the many literary belt-box leftovers stirred a similar memory that goes back 60 years to 1927. Please understand, I am not usually wordless.

But one summer afternoon as an 11-year-old I was taken to my first major league baseball game. It was at Chicago's Comiskey Park and the White Sox were to play the New York Yankees, the team of my No. 1 idol, Babe Ruth.

In those days, kids were allowed to visit pre-game dugouts and it was with thunderstruck awe that I shoved a pencil and a picture torn from a magazine toward the Great Man and watched him scribble his name.

When I was a grown man and the Babe was dead, I still mourned that I had been too numb even to say thanks.

Mr. Hartmann, before it's too late, that's what I meant to say to you, too. And to both you and Mrs. Hartmann, happy anniversary.

## 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.

## Educators skirt what is at issue

To the editor:

Recommendations by the Farmington Early Childhood Task Force at the February board of education meeting — held at the showpiece Fairview Early Childhood Center — could hardly have been surprising to the petition-armed, overflow crowd.

It was a crowd that strongly voiced objections to that idea of centralizing kindergartners into early childhood centers.

Most surprising was that the board expressed no curiosity about the other four issues which the task force was also to examine, including study of a "voluntary extended day" kindergarten, similar to programs in neighboring districts.

The administration has always insisted such a self-supporting program was impossible because of a lack of classroom space.

Why can space so easily be found for more costly programs the administration wishes to implement?

The board and superintendent repeatedly said that no final decision would be made at the February "fact-finding" meeting. They suggested interested parties consult the Observer, or ask to be put on a mailing list so they might be informed when discussion of task force findings would resume.

There are new developments which, apparently, the board of education does not think would be significant to the electorate.

Parents of this fall's kindergartners received a notice informing them they have the "option" of sending their children to a "voluntary kindergarten program" . . . providing a "total school environment" for young children. Busing will be provided.

Parents scanning the Observer for the promised notice in the school board agenda, and finding none, may have wondered just how the decision to apply the task force recommendation, even on a limited basis, was reached.

Assistant superintendent Lynn Nutter said the board gave an "informal OK." Since this was just something they wanted "to give a try," it was not put on the agenda, as is frequently the case



Bonnie Gregory reads to her developmental kindergarten class at Fairview Early Childhood Center.

with more minor administrative decisions, he said.

When asked how there was suddenly classroom space available at Fairview and Alameda, Nutter replied that two programs would be moved out to make room for the kindergartners, but said he was "not at liberty" at the present time to say which ones.

Nutter was later approached with the idea that Farmington Schools now have at their disposal an ideal means of implementing an optional self-supporting extended kindergarten day. Nutter replied that while the suggestion would be given "consideration," there was no room.

There must be a purpose for this new program, which the Board did not see fit to address in a public forum. It raises several questions.

Could it be that task force report framers are hoping to provide further ammunition for this unpopular cause, when the issue is next publicly aired, by having concrete, positive results to show? Isn't it fair to suppose that staff at the "total school environment for young children" will vary their approach from that of teachers in the elementary kindergartens? Otherwise, why bother.

And if this program has been established only to study new education techniques, why create a new kindergarten location in which to do it? Will the children in elementary schools be guinea pigs in the "control group" of an experiment?

If changes in teaching methods are

needed, let's allow all of next year's kindergartners to benefit. If the argument is that a comparison group is needed, this year's entire group of kindergartners could be studied instead.

Even principals of overcrowded elementary schools, who desperately need more space, could hardly be expected to appreciate the unfavorable comparison their schools are bound to receive in this rigged comparison of kindergartens. With the directors of both centers and other center employees on the task force, and sure to be the final arbiters at the end of the experiment, how can this fall to happen?

Incidentally, the overcrowding — a situation which was denied as a rationale for centralization — could be alleviated if Shiawassee was reinstated as an elementary. It was earmarked by the task force as a possible third early childhood center.

Perhaps the key issue, however, is the underhanded way the school board appears to solve its problems in general. Why is an issue which astounded the board by the sheer numbers of residents who opposed it, suddenly thought too insignificant to be again brought up in a promised, public forum?

How many petitioners and voters who wanted kindergarten and its improvements left in elementary schools would like to know which elected representatives gave the "informal OK?"

Just as in the recent case of the high school redistricting controversy, the board chose to notify only the parents of those students affected next year, leaving the rest of the electorate still eagerly scanning their Weekly Observer agendas for the promised notice of further consideration.

Don't parents of students to be affected in subsequent years deserve to know board determinations? What about property owners, whose investment may be affected?

Board-appointed superintendent Lewis may have been correct when, after Fairview had cleared of all but the "die-hard" late on Feb. 17, he said, "Sometimes the board has to make unpopular decisions."

Let us hope the board remembers they are elected officials, whose mandate comes from a majority if these concerned enough to vote.

Linda R.S. Pickering  
Farmington Hills

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